Adventure
December
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Inside Front Page
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ADVENTURE for JANUARY

"A *MAGAZINE edited for the universal hunger of human nature for adventure.*"

Like all other undertakings, ***ADVENTURE*** expects to improve and grow as time goes on—believes it will do so. This increases the natural feeling of satisfaction in various comments that have come since the November number was issued a month ago. "Fine, but can you keep it up?" "Great stuff, but a hard pace you've set for yourself," and other expressions along the same line.

Yes, we can keep it up. We know what we have in the office in the way of *Adventure Stories,* and what is coming along from the favorite writers who are active in this field. There is no worry on that score. If you'll watch the magazine, we'll agree to keep you interested.

Every month at least one good detective adventure story. This is one type of adventure fiction of widest appeal that will always be found in these pages. Next month the complete novel, ***Thirty-one New Inn,*** by R. Austin Freeman, is a detective story, a genuine thriller, with mystery and reality, plot and adventure well mixed. Besides this, several of the short stories belong in the detective class.

Every month at least one good sea adventure. In January there are three—***A Cargo of Machiavellis,*** second of J. W. Muller's humorous stories of salt water; ***Out from Barbados,*** a wireless story of the Caribbean, by Robert A. Morton; and the third gripping instalment of ***Yellow Men and Gold,*** the big serial of treasure-hunting in the South Pacific, by Gouverneur Morris.

Every month at least one good business adventure story. In January Carmelita Sofia McCann, soldier of fortune in petticoats, extends her journeys to London, in ***Humpo, Limited,*** by Clarice Vallette McCauley.

The stories of foreign adventure are varied and stirring. ***The Samaritan of the Riverine,*** by Randolph Bedford, is a tale of Australia, ***The Palm Oil Ruffian,*** by Thomas Samson Miller, is a tale of Darkest Africa, and ***The Custom of the Country,*** by John Le Breton, is a tragedy of India.

Then there is humorous adventure, crime adventure, and romantic adventure, of which the big serial, ***Can a Man Be True?*** by Winifred Graham, is the best type.

With fact stories as well as fiction to give variety, the January ***ADVENTURE*** is a number that will win a warm welcome from its readers.

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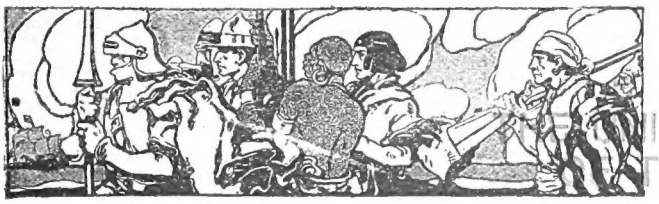

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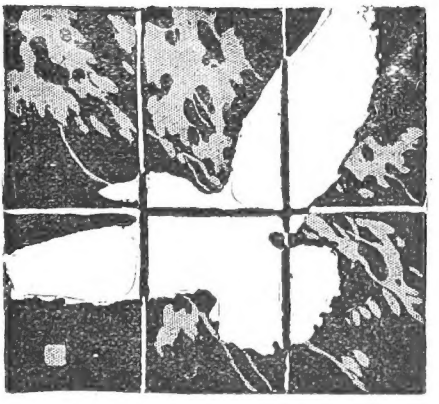

The White Rook

by James Barr

A WINDING high-hedged lane in Suffolk; to either side fat, rolling fields, guarded by sturdy sentry oaks and elms and beeches; the June gloaming deepening into night, and John Strong swinging along the lane.

Artists, as a species, are effervescent folk; John Strong was morosity epitomized. Artists are demonstrative in joys and sorrows; John Strong was a stoic. Let the occasion be one of rejoicing or of wailing, he was silent in his emotions. His features never relaxed their strength; a bronze of Rodin could have been no more firmly set in its expression of masculine bearing.

John Strong painted for all time, this the critical in art recognized. Indeed, so commandingly virile were his works that the great unknowing public, shuffling through the rooms of the Royal Academy, were brought up with a turn when confronted by one of John Strong's dark paintings. The public did not enjoy the paintings. The public looked at them with much the same expression as one might look at a railway accident or a public hanging, but, in spite of themselves, they were forced, they were compelled to look.

John Strong despised the public, as he despised the critics in art. Himself and the

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universe were all that mattered. So exclusive of himself and all that appertained to himself was John Strong that he refused to sign his name to picture or letter, check or receipt. Banking at Cox's, in London, most considerate of institutions, John Strong had caused to be drawn up a power of attorney in favor of one of the clerks. When a check arrived for him John Strong shoved it into an envelope and forwarded it to the bank where the clerk endorsed it "John Strong, per Reginald Rahley," and paid it into Strong's account. When the artist desired cash he dropped into the bank, growled "Fifty pounds," and walked out with the money. When he had gone, the clerk drew a check for the fifty, signed it, and thus made regular the transaction. With reference to his never signing a painting he growled that when he beheld a sunset signed in the corner by the Almighty he would follow suit, but not till then.

In this John Strong was mistaken. He signed one painting.

But John Strong was peculiar in other ways than his hatred of his signature. Once a picture was finished he cared not the waft of a butterfly what became of it. The finishing touch put upon it, John Strong would snatch it off the easel and lean it with its face to the wall. There the men who looked after the studio would find it, carefully place it in a box and, the paint still wet, would forward it to a firm of dealers in Bond Street, and there was an end of the matter. John Strong kept no record of his pictures; he did not even so much as glance at the checks the Bond Street people sent him, but shoved them into another envelope and forwarded them to Cox's. At no time in his career since opening a banking-account could he have made a reasonably close guess at the amount to his credit at the bank. Once, when the clerk spoke to him about investing some of the thousands he had lying to his credit, John Strong barked back: "Do what you please!" turned on his heel and walked out.

Always his paintings had in them a touch at least of the terror of existence. One who looked upon a John Strong canvas had brought clearly to his mind much of the savagery as well as much of the beauty of life. People said the artist was well named. His handling of everything was strong, strength was the key-note of his work—strength of drawing, strength of idea, strength of technique, strength even in the repose of his paintings, strength everywhere. He impelled consideration, he challenged attention. To weak souls his paintings were terrifying in their savage ruggedness.

Personally he was as approachable as a gorilla. About England he came and went unheralded. No soul sought his society, no one had ever beheld him unbend. He allowed himself to be fêted and feasted never, nor was he ever seen where artists congregate.

John Strong swung along the Suffolk lane. A week before he had taken lodgings at a farmhouse where the good folk had never heard the name of John Strong, and it was not long before they repented of having let a room to six feet of silent savagery. For the first few days they wondered and speculated. Afterward they frankly feared him—feared that they harbored one who had committed some dark-red crime. They peered through the windows at him as he sat long hours under an apple tree smoking his great black briar, and they were glad when, each afternoon, he quitted the seat and struck off for his long walks which carried him far into the night.

Along the high-hedged lane John Strong swung, the June gloaming deepening into night. He loved to shove his face into the night, he gloried in the uncertainty of night, the indefiniteness of night, and his soul cried back a wild answer to the cry of the night-hawk and the owl. Night is more primitive than day, night is more calamitous, night is a savage, night everywhere is the true aborigine. Day has taken on civilization; night hurls the world back to the day of the war-club, the flint arrowhead, the painted visage. John Strong loved the night with an almost malevolent love. In the night he could hear the Valkyries screaming, the witches riding their broom-sticks, the ghouls scraping the mold from off the new-buried coffin. John Strong swung along, his face set to meet oncoming night.

On a sudden John Strong stood stiff. An angry scowl came over his face as he listened to the stutter of a motor-car making its way down the lane behind him. The car, he could tell, was traveling on second speed, yet was quickly overtaking him. This chug-chugging diabolic mechanism of man!

The thought occurred to the painter to leap the hedge and strike off across the

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fields, but this thought he shoved behind him. He would allow nor man nor machine to turn him from his path, so on he tramped until the headlight behind him spread a glare on the road and hedges before him, his own shadow wriggling on the ground like a monster of antediluvian days. Then John Strong stepped to the hedge, turned his back on the lane, and waited for the motor to pass.

"Am I right for the Ipswich road?"

The man who asked the question spoke in the stilted style of a foreigner; the words, too, were tinged with foreign accent. John Strong made no answer, continuing to gaze across the field. The car had come to a stop immediately behind him.

"Can you tell me whether this lane leads into the Ipswich road?" repeated the voice. John Strong continued silent. A man had stepped out of the car and stood peering round John Strong's shoulder to get a glimpse of the painter's face. The painter kept his eyes in the indefinite distance, and his lips tight shut.

The next instant something happened, for, suddenly, John Strong found his head enveloped in what was evidently tough, coarse sacking, and he himself thrashing about as though for his very life. Arms, heavy thewed, had been flung about the painter's neck, failing, however, to pinion him effectively, for with a mighty thrust of his strong legs he heaved himself backward upon his assailant so that assailant and victim together struck the earth with a chaotic crash.

Then began a long, vehement struggle, John Strong growling grimly, as do all savage natures when they fight. With arms and legs he thrust and thrashed, he doubled and twisted and squirmed as a crocodile might through which Jove had driven a javelin. As in all the dour determination of his dark nature he flailed about him he heard the foreign voice crying caution to his assailant:

"Do not sprain him! Hold his arms! Fling yourselves on his legs! Have a care, have a care!"

Kicking, butting, tearing, gasping, John Strong fought on minute by minute, but gradually even his vast store of virile strength became sapped, yes, in spite of his inexpungable, indomitable will. Had it not been for that sack flung over his head hampering him and limiting his breath he might have made a winning fight of it, even though he fought heavy odds, but there the sack was, and in the end it settled matters. From fierce action John Strong suddenly passed to sullen, ominous inaction. Without further protest he allowed his assailants to snap handcuffs on his wrists and to wind clothesline round his legs and body till he lay like an Egyptian mummy.

The foreign voice spoke:

"Take off the sack. I must make sure we have the right man."

"Precious little doubt of that after the fight he put up! We could have robbed a Scotsman of a saxpence as easily as secure this man," said a voice, frankly English. The sack was removed and John Strong glared up into the masked faces of four men. Two of them were wiping perspiration from the backs of their necks, a third had his fingers pressed to what was evidently a damaged right eye, and the fourth looked critically at the artist.

"Right!" said the foreigner, satisfied with his scrutiny of Strong's features. "Right. Now gag him, gently."

Bending down over Strong, the man said soothingly:

"Be not afraid, sir. No harm is to be done you so long as you go quietly, no harm at all. But you must go quiet, you comprehend?"

Strength was returning to John Strong. To go quietly, to abide dictation was not in him. When one of the men knelt by his side to apply the gag the artist flapped himself over like a fish and bit so savagely at the man's wrist that his teeth came together with the snap of a steel trap. The fellow leaped to his feet and swung back a heavily booted foot to kick, but the foreigner sprang between the standing man and the prostrate and pushed the former away.

"I told you gag him, not kick him!" exclaimed the foreigner excitedly.

"Gag him yourself!" growled the fellow. "I don't want hydrophobia."

"Sir," began the foreigner, turning to Strong, "I must gag you. Sir, make it your duty to receive the same. I do not harm you, no, not the little piece of harm. I but do my duty."

The man did not place implicit trust in this soothing speech, for he called upon one of the men to hold Strong's head. This the fellow did and John Strong soon found himself gagged and blindfolded. Next he felt

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himself being carried and stowed away inside the motor-car.

"I hope you are in comfort. You shall be all right soon," said the spokesman, and off the car rocked and pitched.

John Strong could make nothing of the mystery, although he turned the matter over and over again in his mind. Robbery? To rob did not necessitate binding, gagging, blindfolding and transporting in a motor. The four could easily have gone through his pockets and left him lying in the lane. Ransom? Holding for ransom is long out of date in England. The thing is so unlikely of success as to put it out of consideration as a means of raising money. Besides, a man known to have neither relations or friends who care two straws what becomes of him or who would loosen purse-strings to assist him, a man who, apparently, possesses no great financial resources—such a man is not the sort that brigands and kidnappers molest. No, some other purpose than money-making lay behind this outrage, but what that purpose might be John Strong could not hope to guess. Consequently, as he was powerless to shape the course of events, he made a virtue of necessity by allowing events to shape themselves.

Time passed—John Strong guessed half-an-hour—the car booming along without a pause. Then it swooped gently to a full stop, and no sooner had its wheel ceased to spin than the painter found himself being lifted up and carried, it seemed to him, upstairs, where he was placed in a chair. He heard a door shut, heard bolts shot, and then some one came and removed the galling gag and unbound his eyes. Blinking, John Strong took in his surroundings. A garret, —rather the loft of a barn or stable—perhaps twenty feet square, the floor strewn with straw and devoid of furniture, except for a campstool, an easel and a rough wooden bench. One small window, now carefully boarded up, was let into the pitch of the roof, which roof consisted but of rafters supporting red tiles. Rafters, tiles and the pitch of the roof proclaimed an old, old building.

An electric lamp lighted the place, and by the easel, which stood against a rough board partition, was a pile of canvases of assorted sizes, while nearby lay a large painting-box, its lid thrown open in such a way as to display many paints and a great bundle of brushes. Their backs against the door, stood two powerful men, each wearing a domino of black silk and each, too, holding in his hand a heavy revolver. Even to John Strong, steel-nerved and all, matters looked decidedly sinister. The men stood silently gazing at John Strong, John Strong glowered back at the men. The artist was the first to speak.

"Well?" he ejaculated. "Well, what next?"

One answered, speaking in quiet determination:

"You will not attempt to escape. You will not make a sound. You will paint a picture."

"I am not in the habit of being dictated to——"

"You will fall into that habit instantly."

John Strong's eyes blazed in anger. He was on the point of speaking when the man held up a restraining hand.

"John Strong, you are a determined man, but this can break the will of the most stubborn." The man grimly tapped the revolver as he spoke. Strong recognized his helplessness.

"What picture am I to paint?" he growled.

Handing his revolver to his comrade, the man stepped forward, unlocked the handcuffs and unlashed the rope that bound the artist.

"Sit down on that campstool," said the man, pointing to the stool beside the easel. Strong strode across and seated himself. The man placed his hand against the partition; dramatically he threw back a small sliding-door and pointed into the next division of the loft.

"There's your picture!"

John Strong peered through the opening.

Had any other artist in the world but John Strong occupied that campstool the chances are a thousand to one he would have either leaped wildly to his feet or else fallen off the stool at the horror of the sight. Even John Strong, dogged, unemotional, heart of quartz, started just a trifle and opened his eyes just a little wider than was natural. Yet he made no exclamation. Indeed, after a moment's pause he leaned forward until his face was flush with the partition, and thus he sat gazing, as though fascinated by the grim horror of the scene before his eyes. Some one, he said to himself, had most ably stage-managed.

He saw a continuation of the loft in which he sat. The place was in more than semi-

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darkness, an electric lamp, hanging somewhere on the partition—he could not see where—flinging down subdued rays on the center of the floor, making the far wall and the sides ghostly visible. Darkness and shadows bulked in the room under the slant of the roof, and golden-red straw billowed out to spread over the floor. From a rafter hung a scythe corroded with rust, and from the blackest corner flared two green-fire discs which Strong knew to be the eyes of a suspicious cat blazing "Ware-war!"

And in the center of the circle of dim light, flung at full length upon the straw, lay a dead man, his eyes wide open, and a red gash across his throat. In those eyes, which stared their film-stare at John Strong, still shone the terror of a red death, while on the marble white face sat the ineffable calm of eternal sleep.

A little while John Strong removed his face from the aperture, the while he rubbed his forehead to clear his vision; then he returned to the sight.

The body, he noticed, was that of a young man, a strong, fair, well nurtured, well groomed man of not more than twenty-five. The fingers, clamped about a handful of straw, were long and sensitive; the clear-cut features told of good breeding and refinement; the clothes, the ruby pin glowing a kindly red glow there close to the straw, betokened a man of means. The attitude of the body was eloquent of protest against death. To a man so young and strong and unharassed, death seemed so unnecessary, and, moreover, to have come in a shape devoid of all beauty and taste. The darknesses that banked round the prostrate form stretched forth long tentative shadows which, like timid fingers, played gingerly upon the white face and sensitive hands, causing that ruby light to blink out and glow again like the imp-lamp of a will-o'-the-wisp.

John Strong turned to his jailers.

"Well?" he said.

"You can paint by electric light?"

"I can."

"You will paint that picture."

To himself John Strong said: "Why not? I desire no better subject. It is one I could not have arranged for myself in this mule country where human life is considered before art. Yes, I have a savage desire to paint this scene. What it all means, what that dead young man may mean, I do not know, but I don't know that I much care, either." He spoke to the man:

"Yes, I will paint. It will be a picture after the heart of John Strong."

The man bowed politely.

"I can desire nothing better than a real John Strong."

The artist jerked his head toward "the picture."

"Must the arrangement be as it is now, or may I heighten the effect by slight alteration?"

"The face of the dead man must be distinctly recognizable. That is the only limitation imposed upon you, sir."

"Very well. One of you pop in there and follow my directions."

The man tapped quietly on the door and was immediately answered from the other side. He whispered an order and John Strong beheld a masked man step to a position beside the corpse.

"I want the body foreshortened. Take the legs and point the feet towards that beam. Try not to disturb the cat, its eyes are telling death-lights. Right. Now bend back the head . . . not too much . . . that will do . . . turn the face slightly to the right . . . too much . . . a little farther back . . . press down the chin . . . right. Don't interfere with the left arm, it is fine, but straighten the right . . . now *get out!*"

Tearing off his coat, John Strong flung it into a corner. Down on his knees he dropped and began pawing over the paints his captors had provided for him and which, with satisfaction he noticed, were the best Cambridge colors. "Still life, by John Strong," "Still Life, by John Strong," he kept repeating to himself, a cruel grin on his square jaws. From the many he chose one canvas, placed it on the easel and, plunging into his work, instantly became oblivious of everything but the "Still Life" his eyes beheld when they peered through the aperture in the partition. Seated, his guards watched him behind their silk dominoes.

Furiously John Strong painted, purring and growling as might a tiger over a peacock smashed by a marauding paw, and from amorphose background the gruesome picture began to loom into being, gradually heaving into shape as a great liner heaves out of encompassing blackness. Half an hour after the start John Strong laid hold of the neck of his waistcoat and literally

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tore the garment off his back, flinging the mangled thing away from him; ten minutes, and necktie and collar followed. Perspiration streamed down his nose and cheeks, and every now and again he flung back his shoulders to perlustrate both subject and picture, his teeth bared and lips curling like the fangs and the lips of a snarling animal.

The guards had made themselves familiar with the artist's habits, for they kept a large tankard filled with the best of stout, and automatically John Strong thrust forth his hand, snatched up the tankard and swigged it dry at a draught. To the guards, as time passed, it seemed as though years began to heap themselves on John Strong, for his face became shrunken and wrinkled and crinkled, and his features sharper and more prominent. The fierce fire of infatuation was visibly burning his stored-up vitality.

Again without removing eyes from canvas, he shoved forth his hand, this time picking from a plate a leg of cold roast fowl which he held in his left hand and tore at, whilst never ceasing to paint with his right. The watchers, sitting so silently, felt themselves in danger of hypnotism by the exhibition of primitive savagery. They stirred uneasily, and the hours passed.

In the east the skirmishers of oncoming Day had begun to thrust rapiers of light into Night's retreating rearguard, so that the sky was streaked with red when, abruptly, John Strong's hands relaxed and palette and brushes fell to the floor. Painfully he got upon his feet and, as one who walks in his sleep, tottered to a corner of the loft, sank to his knees, then to his hands, and finally heaved over, curled up until knees and chin all but met, and was sound asleep.

Tip-toeing, one of the guards picked up abandoned waistcoat and coat and gently spread them over the unknowing artist's shoulders, then, appalled by its strength, appalled by its realism, appalled by its awful pathos, the two men stood before the painting. From the canvas the dead man cried for sympathy, knowing no sympathy could help him; he cried for mercy, knowing mercy was not for him; he cried for vengeance, knowing that vengeance could be of no avail. While the painter slept the sleep of one worn out utterly, the two men turned the picture's face to the wall. They could not bear its hoarse, hollow, voiceless imploring.

It was past noon when John Strong awoke. The boards had been removed from the little window, and the sunshine struck into the loft brilliantly. With the tips of his fingers John Strong felt his throat.

"Not cut—yet!" he growled, sitting up.

"Your throat is in no danger, Mr. Strong."

"What next?" demanded the painter.

"We wait for darkness. Under cover of night we take you to where last night we picked you up."

"That finishes with me, then?"

"Yes, after you sign your painting."

"I never sign," barked John Strong.

"You will see your way to make one esception—this."

The timbre of finality rang in those quiet-spoken words. John Strong recognized that finality. He got upon his feet, replaced the canvas on the easel and, with the tip of the brush-handle, scratched in the wet paint, "Signed, under compulsion, John Strong."

"That will do excellently," said the man, and from that time onward little more was said.

John Strong spent the afternoon pulling at the pipe and gazing up through the window at rooks which flew incessantly to and fro. Their raucous cries told him that nearby the birds attended to their young. Once only did the artist display interest. He asked:

"Any use me asking a question about—that?"

With a nod of his head he indicated the next room.

"Not the least use," replied the man.

"I thought not. Am I likely ever to know?"

"You are certain to know some day."

"I can't say that I am greatly interested." Then, glancing keenly at the picture, he added, "You have there one of the greatest John Strong's ever painted."

"I am satisfied," acknowledged the man. "What do you value that piece at?"

Strong's quick temper was aroused:

"Value? Value? What do you mean by 'value'?"

"What price would you have obtained for it in the ordinary course of business?"

"Business!" bawled John Strong, paying not the slightest attention to the upheld warning hand. "Business! There is no business end to my art. I paint what I believe in. I paint it the way I believe in.

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That accomplished, I have no shadow of interest in the matter. It is the doing that matters, that's all."

"But you must live? I would like to pay you one hundred pounds for this."

John Strong interrupted vehemently:

"Keep your pounds. I would not hold them in my hand for so long as is needed to throw them into the fire."

"Very well," quietly replied the man.

Night fell and John Strong, unprotesting, allowed himself to be blindfolded and bound and carried to the motor. When again his feet touched firm ground he found himself in the narrow lane at the identical spot where his outing had been so dramatically ended the night before. Seizing his walking-stick by the middle, he struck resolutely ahead to finish the interrupted walk. He had turned over in his mind the matter of reporting to the police, but quickly decided to do nothing of the sort. To suit his ends he would not have hesitated to lay violent hands on a man, and his savage honesty induced him to allow others equal liberty. His imprisoners had shown him a striking scene; he had painted a splendid picture. That was enough. He dropped the matter.

II

TEN days passed, and John Strong sat under the apple tree. It was nearing eleven o'clock when a motor-car roared up and came to a standstill before the gate. Two men, tall, athletic, bronzed, leaped out and strode rapidly to where sat John Strong. The artist, under his lowering eyebrows, watched their approach. One man spoke with masterful lack of preliminaries:

"You are Mr. John Strong, the artist."

"I am not disputing the fact," John Strong replied sharply.

"Thank you. Within the last two weeks have you painted a picture?"

"Is that any business of yours?"

The man shoved his hand into a breast pocket, drew forth a loosely rolled paper and tossed it upon the artist's knee.

"Do me the favor of glancing at that."

John Strong raised his hand to dash the paper off his lap, but on second thought refrained. He unrolled the paper and saw that it was a first-class photograph of the picture he had painted in the loft.

"I have done you the favor," he said, glancing up at the man.

"You painted the original?"

"What about it?"

The man looked earnestly into the painter's eyes. He asked:

"Was the young man really dead?"

"Dead!" exclaimed John Strong, laughing a mirthless laugh. "Dead! I never saw a deader. Dead! He was as dead as paleolithic man—dead as a fossil. Yes, dead, dead, dead—beautifully dead."

The two strangers exchanged glances. John Strong gazed at them both. The spokesman strolled a few steps away and, hands shoved deep into his pockets, stood watching his toe tap a daisy into the ground. He strolled back.

"Would you care to know who he was you saw dead, 'dead as a fossil'?"

"I raise no objections to being told."

"He was the only son of your greatest patron."

"Patron?" barked Strong indignantly. "Sir, I'll have you understand no man alive is allowed to patronize me! I have never had a patron, I have no patron now, nor shall I ever have a patron. Whom do you mean by patron?"

"The man who has bought every picture you have painted during the last ten years. You know who that is, I take it?"

"Not I!" blurted out John Strong.

"The Grand Duke Strakof of Russia. It was his son you saw lying 'beautifully dead' as you put it."

"The Grand Duke's name conveys nothing to my mind. I never heard of him before this minute."

"Then let me enlighten you. The Grand Duke is a man of power and possessions and of a somewhat violent, some hold cruel, nature. His possessions place even your paintings within his reach; his nature, it may be, accounts for his great liking for your work."

The man paused as if to allow John Strong to make protest against the statement. John Strong said nothing.

"The Grand Duke has been heavy of hand in beating out revolt and discontent among the common people of his district. This has brought down upon his head the wrath of the Nihilists."

"You are of the Russian Secret Service?" interrupted John Strong.

The man, nodding, continued: "A month ago the Grand Duke's only son came to London. Eleven days ago he mysteri-

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ously disappeared. Four days ago there arrived at the Grand Duke's palace a painting, and with the painting a letter. The letter was brief and to the point. It ran:

"You are a persecutor of the Russian people and a collector of John Strong's paintings. The representatives of the Russian people have pleasure in presenting you with the latest John Strong. Honor us and your acts by hanging this of your son among your family portraits."

Pulling at his pipe, John Strong brought back the picture to mind in its every detail —the shadows, amorphose, uncanny; the glinting eyes of the wary cat; the scythe, rust-eaten; the golden straw, red-mottled; and that young body flung there in an attitude so elequent of hopeless petition and protest.

"Revenge fit for a Cæsar," muttered the artist.

"Where did you paint the picture?"

John Strong shook his head.

"In a loft, somewhere, but where that somewhere may be the gods alone know."

In short, terse sentences the artist recounted his adventure.

"Then the place is within twenty miles of here," said the officer, when Strong had ended. "Think, Mr. Strong. Is there nothing, no matter how apparently trivial, that you can recall which may furnish us with a clue, a clue however slight?"

After thinking a moment John Strong glanced up.

"Yes, there is. There is one thing. Close at hand was a rookery, and three times past the window flew a white rook."

"That's clue enough for a blind man!" ejaculated the officer. "A barn or stable within half-an-hour's motor run; a rookery, with a white rook. Ample, ample! By this time to-morrow I shall have explored that loft. Under the straw is the body."

The men were about to depart when John Strong restrained them.

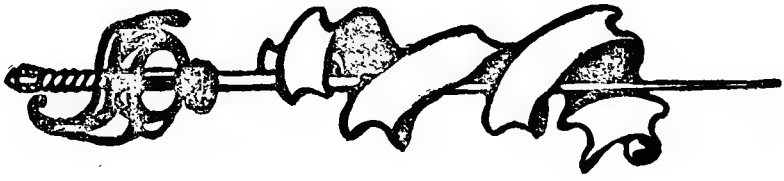
"There will be great publicity, and I shall be dragged to inquests and courts."

The officer shook his head:

"There will be neither inquests nor courts. I'll tell you what there will be. There will appear the report of the sudden illness and unexpected death of the Grand Duke's son. There will be a gorgeous funeral at St. Petersburg, and—there will be a silent, unflinching vengeance falling upon the perpetrators of this atrocity. That is all. The name of John Strong will not appear—providing John Strong can keep his own counsel. And this I'll say, that were I the owner of John Strong's throat I would not allow the rack to cause me to utter word of anything that has happened."

As he peered into John Strong's, the officer's eyes glowed with a devil-light akin to that of the cat's in the black loft. A minute later and the motor was whirling the two visitors off.

In his newspaper John Strong read of the sudden death of the Grand Duke's only son and subsequently of the pompous funeral in St. Petersburg. All the world was affected by the sudden death, for the young man had been of great promise.



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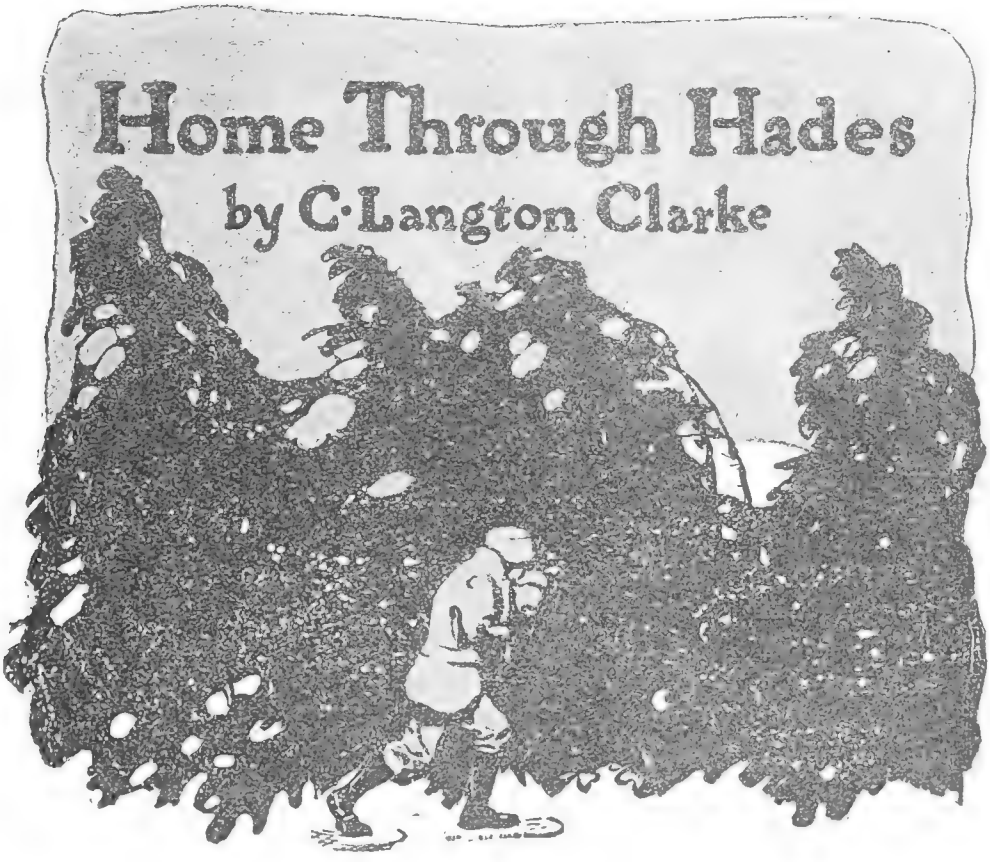
Home Through Hades

by C. Langton Clarke



THE leveler beat his bare hands, numbed by contact with brass thumbscrews and pencil, first against each other and then more vigorously on his legs, blew a warm, tobacco-laden breath into the hollow of his palms and fingers, and hailed the rodman as he hurried past on snowshoes, his long leveling-rod sloped over his shoulder.

"Quit awhile, Marryatt," he said. "No need to tear ourselves to pieces. We can catch up on the transit in half an hour. They won't get through that belt of bush before night."

Marryatt, the rodman, nothing loth, turned short in his tracks, thrust the butt of his rod deep into the snow and joined his superior. Together they stood for a moment looking forward to where the line of stakes, breaking the soft sweep of snow-covered waste, ran up and disappeared in a narrow tunnel in the wall of second-growth timber a quarter of a mile ahead. The red and white ringed staff of the back picketman leaned against a tree, and the picketman himself might be dimly discerned, taking his ease on a fallen sapling. To their ears came the rhythmical tune of ax-edge on spruce and hemlock.

"Gee Whiz, but it's cold!" commented Marryatt. "I don't see how you stand it without mitts, Blackstock. My fingers are like chunks of ice."

Blackstock laughed a deep-chested laugh. He was a tall, rawboned man, with a face scorched and whipped and bitten to the consistency of leather by many years of sun, wind and frost. His black hair and beard were plentifully flecked and sprinkled with gray. He wore a mangy old cap of plucked muskrat, and a reefer coat which had once been blue but now displayed as many colors as a spectroscope. A coarse knitted scarf of red worsted was twisted about his sinewy neck.

"When you've been as long at this business as I have, Marryatt," he said, "a few degrees of cold more or less won't make much difference to you."

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"I should think you would be pretty well sick of it by this time," replied Marryatt, a slight, boyish-looking youngster in a somewhat dandified outfit of blanket suit and gaudy lumberman's tuque. "I wonder— –" he hesitated.

Blackstock laughed again, but with some constraint. "Spit it out," he said. "You wonder, I suppose, that a man who is within a few months of fifty-five and has been engineering ever since he was twenty should have nothing better to do than muss along with a level on a one-horse location, at seventy-five dollars a month. That's what you were going to say, isn't it?"

"Well, not exactly in those words," replied the rodman, slightly embarrassed, "but it certainly does seem natural that a man with your experience and who knows as much about things as you do ought to be holding a better job."

Blackstock looked at the fresh young face and the honest eyes in which liking and admiration shone, and sighed.

"Hang it, Marryatt," he said, "I like you, and that's more than I've said to any man for a long while. Come to the lee of that bunch of cedars—no need to freeze in our moments of relaxation—and I'll hand you a little personal history, if you care to hear it. It'll do me good to have one confidant at least, even if he isn't much more than a kid."

The two strode side by side to where a clump of evergreens offered a scanty break against the biting wind, and thrust themselves among the branches, half sitting, half leaning.

"In the first place," began the leveler, "my name isn't Blackstock. I am traveling under an alias, as they say of the criminal classes, or incognito when they refer to royalty or dukes. I belong neither to the one class nor the other. I didn't commit murder or rob or forge or things like that, but, all the same, I have served a term in jail."

He glanced at his companion to see how he took it, and then, rumpling his grizzled beard in his powerful hand, stared ahead in silence for a few moments like one who glimpses a painful vision.

"There was a man once," he went on, "who held a responsible position, and one day, in a moment of forgetfulness, he omitted to take certain precautions. As a result of his carelessness a life was snuffed out—the life of one he loved almost as a brother. The man was put on trial for manslaughter and served a six months' term. They let him down easy because there were others almost as much to blame as he. He was a married man with one little girl. When he came back from jail things were changed. His wife—God forgive her!—was a woman who set much store by her social position, and that sentence stood between them always like a cloud. One day, in a passion, she called the man 'jailbird.' That was enough. He packed up a few things that night and slipped away. His wife had a good income of her own and did not need his support. He went north, many hundred miles, to make a new start, and when he applied for a job on a survey it was under a new name. That was fifteen years ago. He hasn't made much progress in that time, has he?"

"And the wife and child?" asked Marryatt diffidently. "Has he——?"

"He has never set eyes on them from that day, but he keeps in touch with them, although they don't know it. There are one or two old friends in the old home town who know where he is, and they keep him posted once in a while. The little girl is a grown woman now. One of those old friends sent me her picture not long ago. Would you care to see it?"

Blackstock pulled open his discolored reefer, his coarse flannel shirt and his still coarser under vest, exposing a mighty chest against which gleamed a large gold locket suspended from a black ribbon. He detached it and handed it to his companion.

"My one extravagance," he said. "But I think you will admit the contents are worthy of the setting."

With his naked chest still exposed to the biting air, he leaned over Marryatt as the latter pried the case open. A very beautiful face looked out at them, the face of a girl in her early twenties.

"She is very lovely," said Marryatt after a long look, handing the locket back.

"She is very like her mother," replied Blackstock simply. "She is to be married soon. The old friend who sent me the picture mentioned it quite casually. He didn't tell me the man's name. Perhaps"—and he laughed mirthlessly—"he forgot that I am not consulted. Simply said it was a good match and how pleased everybody was about it. Some day, please God, when I have something to bring them, and the old

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cloud has blown away, I may go back and see them, but—*quien sabe?*"

He sighed heavily, and hung the locket once more about his neck.

"Blackstock," said the rodman, after a long pause, "what's the matter between you and the chief?"

"Lord knows," replied the other. "He doesn't like me, that's certain. I suppose it's because I don't treat him with sufficient deference. These science college graduates, with their heads stuffed full of theories and higher mathematics, think they know more than all us old stagers put together. If it wasn't that his uncle is vice-president of the road, he wouldn't be chief of a party. If it wasn't for Bronson he'd have made more than one bad break. I'm not struck on Bronson—he's a bit too much of a sycophant for my taste, but he ought to be running the party—putting myself out of the question altogether—and Tyler the transit."

"Oh, indeed?" said a voice close beside them.

Both men looked up. Marryatt rose to his feet; Blackstock did not change his position.

The newcomer was a slender, fair-haired man of some twenty-three years of age, with pale blue eyes and a small flaxen mustache twisted into sharp points. He wore a costly fur overcoat and a cap of sea otter. His moccasins were bright with beadwork, and his snowshoes, ornamented with tufts of red and white worsted, were eloquent of a city store and country club tramps.

"It's a pity," he continued in grating accents, "that when they were making up the parties they didn't take you into consultation, Mr. Blackstock."

"I didn't know you were there," replied Blackstock carelessly, "or I wouldn't have made that remark. I don't want to hurt any man's feelings. You see, Tyler, I'm not accustomed to having youngsters from college set over me."

"Oh, indeed?" said Tyler sneeringly. "I suppose you think you know more than all the rest of us together."

Blackstock laughed good-naturedly, rose, and stretched his massive form.

"I reckon I've forgotten more of this business than you ever knew, sonny," he said.

The younger man flushed under his tan. "You haven't given any proofs of it so far!" he said angrily. "What are you loafing here for?"

"Because," replied Blackstock, unruffled, "there's no use in running right on the heels of the transit. They won't get through that strip of bush before late this afternoon."

"You could take an ax," said the chief.

"I could," assented the leveler. "I'm a pretty good axman, but not as good as the men who are chopping now. Better leave it to them."

"Well, anyway, I don't want any loafing," replied Tyler sharply. "It sets a bad example. Get ahead!"

"All right," said Blackstock. "It doesn't matter to me whether I'm blocked here or half a mile farther on. Come on, Marryatt."

He went back to his level, and the chief, with an angry glance at the broad back unceremoniously turned on him, strode on his way.

That night as Blackstock sat smoking in the cook tent, swopping yarns with the grizzled veteran of a cook, Marryatt thrust his head in at the door.

"Tyler wants to see you in his tent, Blackstock," he said.

The leveler heaved up his big limbs from the canned-goods box on which he was seated, and, pipe still in mouth, thrust aside the flap of the chief's tent.

"Wanting to see me?" he asked carelessly.

Tyler, who was bending over a profile stretched on a folding camp-table, looked up.

"I sent for you," he said shortly. "By Thursday night we ought to make Buttland. From there it is only ten miles south to Pottersville. The O. & L. runs through Pottersville, and I understand there is a morning train."

"Meaning?" queried Blackstock.

"Meaning," replied the other, "that I think it would be a good thing if you were to take that train."

"Where to?" asked the leveler.

"To the devil, for all I care!" replied Tyler. "There isn't room in this party for you and me. One of us has got to get out, and I don't propose to resign."

"That," said Blackstock, "is a polite way of telling me that I am fired, I suppose."

"It is," was the reply. "You haven't shown so much consideration for my feelings that I should be particularly tender about yours."

"Is my work unsatisfactory?" demanded Blackstock.

"No," replied the chief. "Your work is

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well enough; it doesn't require a great amount of genius to run a level. But you don't suit me. It isn't exactly that you are insubordinate, but the next thing to it. A man in my position expects some slight show of deference from his subordinates."

"I suppose you realize," said Blackstock, "what it means to a man to be fired at this time of year, when all the parties have been made up, to say nothing of the injury to his reputation?"

His lips were firm under the heavy curtain of his mustache, but a faint, a very faint tremor in his voice betrayed agitation.

"I can't help that," said Tyler. "You ought to have thought of that before. I don't think there is any more to be said. You can take the team to Pottersville on Thursday after Johnson has got through moving camp. Marryatt will take the level, and Aitcheson the rod. I will pick up another axman at Buttland. Your departure will not discommode me in the slightest."

For a minute the two men looked into each other's eyes. "You're in the wrong, Tyler," said the leveler, "but you've got more backbone than I gave you credit for."

Then he swung on his heel and left the tent.

Outside he met Marryatt, whose eyes voiced the questions which his lips did not care to utter.

"Congratulations, old man," Blackstock said easily. "In three days you take over the level. You can fill the job all right."

"D-does that mean that you take the transit?" Marryatt asked anxiously.

"It means that I take the back trail to civilization," the leveler replied with a laugh. "I'm fired."

"What a dirty shame!" cried the youngster angrily, oblivious of his own promotion. "What for?"

"Because," replied the other, "it seems I have neglected to minister to the vanity of our young friend in there, who was getting spanked by his mama when I was holding down a darned sight better job than this."

"The beast!" snapped Marryatt.

"No," said Blackstock impartially, "if it wasn't for his swelled head, he's not a bad fellow, in many ways. He's got backbone, or he wouldn't have fired me the way he did. In some ways I don't know but what I like him better for it. He's got grit and he's got a sort of dogged stick-to-itiveness which I admire. Five years from now, when that balloon in his cranium has been punctured, he'll be a very decent sort of citizen."

"That's a pretty generous thing to say, after the way he has treated you," commented Marryatt.

"Not in the least," replied the other. "It's simply the way I feel about him. The fact that he doesn't like me and I don't like him needn't blind me to his good qualities. The trouble with him is that he's been pitchforked into a job a little too big for him, and I guess he feels a bit sensitive about it at times. Well, no use discussing it any more. It's me for the downy couch."

He turned away whistling, dived into the sleeping-tent, and ten minutes later was sleeping the sound sleep which is the combined product of forest air, a sound constitution and a good conscience.

"Bronson," said Tyler next morning as the party was gulping down the last mouthfuls of a coarse breakfast, "you were on this survey last year. There's an old trial line to the south, isn't there?"

The transitman nodded. "About three miles south of here," he said. "Run three years ago, nearly parallel with this location for some six miles east, along the south slope of that hardwood ridge. Pretty good location, too, to my mind—better than this one. There's one bad place, an eighty-foot gully about a hundred yards across, but the grade is easier."

"I'm going to have a look at it to-day," said the chief. "It might be worth running an alternative location before we push much farther west. I'll be back some time before night."

He rose and went out of the tent, followed by the rest of the party to make ready for the day's work.

"See that bald-headed bit of the ridge?" said Bronson, deferentially taking his chief by the elbow. "You make for that. Then strike south about three-quarters of a mile and you'll cross the line. It must be pretty well grown up again in places. You want to watch out that you don't pass it."

"Thanks," replied the chief dryly. "I guess I'll recognize a trial line when I see it."

"Don't you be too cocksure about that," broke in Blackstock, who was standing by. "There's quite a growth in three years, and it isn't always too easy to hit a narrow cutting. That line was run in Summer, and the

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stumps and slashings will be covered with snow."

Tyler regarded him in silence and with extreme disfavor.

"And look out for the weather," continued the leveler, unabashed. "That don't look very promising."

He pointed to the north, where, low on the horizon, cutting the frosty blue of the sky in a long straight line, lay a bank of black cloud. "I'm a pretty fair weather-prophet in these latitudes," continued Blackstock, "and that means snow and wind and lots of them, or I'm a Dutchman. You're not much of a bushman, Tyler. Better take some one with you."

"You, I suppose," sneered the other.

"Me, if you like," replied Blackstock coolly; "but take some one who knows his way about."

"Meaning that I don't!" replied the chief angrily. "I'm not aware that your advice was asked, Mr. Blackstock."

"Giving advice costs nothing," replied Blackstock easily. "It costs something sometimes not to take it. However, have it your own way. It's your funeral."

"There's something in what Blackstock says," Bronson said hesitatingly. "It's a pretty rough bit of country, and if a blizzard——"

"That'll do," interrupted Tyler haughtily. "I believe I am chief of this party. Get your men out and start. I can look after myself well enough."

Half an hour later, in blanket coat and tuque, a speck of scarlet to the eyes of the men tramping to work, he was heading for the ridge through the scanty cedar scrub that dotted the shallow valley.

"What did I tell you?" said Blackstock to Marryatt three hours later.

Above their heads hung a canopy of purple cloud, arching from horizon to horizon and fast blotting out the blue of the sky to the south. From the heart of the storm-cloud a biting wind began to whistle among the naked branches of the trees and to shroud the open spaces in a fog of drifting snow.

And then, from above, the snow came rushing to meet the whirl beneath. No soft, fleecy flakes these, but granules of powdered ice, stinging the naked skin like a handful of birdshot thrown by a strong hand, blinding the vision and cutting off the breath in gasps.

Back along the line came Bronson and his ax- and chainmen to where, at the mouth of the bush tunnel, leveler and rodman crouched in shelter.

"Back to the camp!" he yelled. "Thank God, we haven't more than half a mile to make."

Only half a mile, and yet to those men, seasoned as they were to wars of the elements, it seemed a good league. Heads bent sideways to the blast, they struggled in Indian file, each watching through eyelids contracted to narrow slits the figure of the man ahead. And in the van went Blackstock, breaking the track with long powerful strides and steering his course through the white cloud with the unerring instinct of the trained bushman.

They made the camp at last, thanks to their leader, breathless, dazed, half blinded, and in the shelter and warmth of the cook-tent, swilling big tin mugs of tea hastily brewed by the anxious cook, they thawed their numbed senses.

And then Bronson voiced the thought which had taken form in every breast.

"What about Tyler?" he said.

Blackstock, standing beside the sheet-iron stove, turned half around. "I'm going after him," he said simply.

"You?" cried Marryatt.

"Sure," replied the leveler easily. "Tyler knows as much about bush work as a baby in arms. He'd never find his way home alone in this blizzard. A night of it would kill him. He hasn't an ax to build a fire, and as he doesn't smoke, the chances are he hasn't got a match to light one. Some one will have to go after him, and I guess I'm the best for the job."

"I'll go with you!" said Marryatt.

"Not on your life, sonny!" replied Blackstock. "I'll have my hands full with Tyler—if I find him, and I don't want to tote you along as well. One man is better than two for this job, and I'm going alone."

"But, in heaven's name, Blackstock," interrupted Bronson, "where are you going to look for him in this storm? You can't see ten yards ahead of you!"

"Where I'd look for any man who had a particle of common sense in his composition," replied the leveler. "Somewhere on the trial line. Its mostly bush and cedar swamp, and he'll have sense, I reckon, not to tackle the open. Of course, if he has missed the line by any chance and lost him-

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self in the bush to the south, why then—" and Blackstock shrugged his broad shoulders, "God help him! Marryatt, lend me that gimcrack little ax of yours in the sheath, and Bronson, I'll trouble you for that pocket compass to set a line for the ridge. I wish we had brandy or whisky in the camp, but that's past hoping for."

"Tyler has some," volunteered Marryatt. "I was in his tent a few days ago and his dunnage-bag was open. I saw the neck of a bottle with the seal still on."

"Good eyes!" said Blackstock, plunging through the door and entering his chief's tent.

"I suppose it's burglary," he said with a grim laugh, as he bent above the brown canvas bag with its fancy leather trimmings. "However, he can't very well kick. What a dude the man is!"

He threw back the flap and then, for a full minute, he knelt, staring, wide-eyed. Twice he drew his breath in little gasps, and put his hand to his throat as if choking.

Lying on the top of the clothing in the bag was a photograph, the portrait of a very beautiful girl, and on it was written in a firm, vigorous hand, "To Allan, from Monica."

With a hand that trembled, Blackstock drew the locket from his breast and gazed from one portrait to the other with dim eyes.

"My God!" he whispered, as he reverently replaced the picture.

A letter, in the same handwriting as the superscription on the photograph, lay beside it, and he read it without a thought for the breach of honor he was committing. It was the letter of a pure, honest, loving girl to her future husband. "I do hope, dearest," she said in one paragraph, "that you are getting along better with that Mr. Blackstock. Try to be patient. Remember he is much older than you, and from your description I am sure he is a nice fellow even if he does rub you up the wrong way sometimes." And later: "Mother has picked out the dearest little nest for us, and now she is poking around the furniture stores. She makes me quite blush sometimes before the clerks. Do hurry up that old survey and come back to us."

Blackstock laid his lips to the letter, and a tear splashed on the white paper.

"Bless her!" he said as he replaced it, and then every muscle and sinew tautened as he sprang up, snatched the bottle from the bag and strode back to his companions.

"Great Scott, Blackstock," cried Marryatt, "what's the matter? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Get me that ax, quick!" replied the leveler. There was an unwonted ring of command in his tone which made the others stare. "Bronson, where's that compass?"

"Look here, Blackstock," expostulated the transitman, "upon my word you had better give it up. It's nothing but a wild-goose chase."

"Curse you!" said the other fiercely. "Why do you stand jabbering there, wasting time? Get me that compass quick! I tell you"—he spread his shoulders and threw back his head—"I'll bring him back if I freeze every ounce of blood in my body!"

He caught up a picket-staff and slipped his feet into the thongs of his snowshoes. Marryatt came running with the sheath-ax and belt, which Blackstock buckled about his waist, and Bronson, speechless, handed him the compass and helped him to set the line for the naked swell of the ridge which had been Tyler's objective point.

And then, with a nod and a curt "Good-by," Blackstock swung away. For twenty yards, to the men grouped about the cook-tent door, he was a human shape; thirty yards away he was but a blur in the white flurry, and then he vanished.

"God help him!" said Marryatt, as they turned back to the warmth of the tent.

Through the blinding, tearing whirl of snow the big man plodded steadily, southwest by south, with his mangy cap pulled well down over his ears and his neck sunk deep in the collar of his old reefer. Occasionally he glanced at his compass, but for the most part he steered by his own sense of direction. At times a squat, scrub cedar loomed up before him, a shapeless shadow through the veil, took form and dropped behind. His snowshoes sank deep in the powdery snow, but once when he turned and, facing the biting gale, looked behind him, he saw that ten yards away his tracks had been wiped clear. More than once he paused behind a friendly clump to catch the breath which some gust, more furious than ordinary, had snatched from him. But ever he pushed steadily on, cool and confident.

"It's bad enough going," he said to himself, "but it'll be worse coming back."

Presently before him rose almost, it seemed,

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within hand-reach, the dark wall of tamarack and evergreen that fringed the foot of the ridge. Once well within its shelter, with the drift clouds beating against it behind him and the gale roaring and shrieking overhead, he paused to draw breath, shaking the snow from his cap and coat. He tried his pipe, but the intense cold had frozen the stem solid and he thrust it under his bare armpit to thaw out. The air was full of thickly falling snow, but he could see his way clear ahead and he resumed his journey, ever mounting upward. At times he was forced to make a detour to skirt some declivity inaccessible on snowshoes, but he always swung back to his line with the tenacity of a bloodhound.

"Good business!" he cried aloud, as the trees suddenly ceased and gave place to the bare crest where the snow-devils again rioted.

Up and across the open space he struggled, battered and buffeted, and, once more in shelter, he lighted his pipe and began the descent. It was easier going now, and he swung along with easy strides, sucking strongly on his blackened briar. Here he started to blaze a mark occasionally, slicing a tree here and a tree there. Half a mile down the slope he began to walk more slowly, with his chin on his left shoulder and his hawklike gaze scanning the forest. If Bronson were right he was not far from the crossing of the trial line, and it would be easy to miss it in the more open hardwood. So he moved carefully, bending slightly forward.

Through the veil of snow he saw it, even while his snowshoe was poised for a stride which would have carried him across it—a narrow lane cutting the forest at right angles to his track. With a sigh of relief he gashed a long white blaze on the trunk of a big maple and turned into the line.

Swiftly he moved now, watching eagerly for some sign of the man he sought, a broken twig or, haply, in some spot partly protected from the snowfall, the faint outline of a snowshoe. But the unbroken sheet of white gave no sign that any man had passed that way before him.

A mile and a half down the cutting a small tree lay athwart his track, some three feet above the level. From heel to top the snow lay heaped in an even ridge. His heart sank. It was plain that no foot had touched it since the snow began to fall, and no man could have crossed it without resting his shoe on it.

And then it was borne in on the searcher that his quest was hopeless. Tyler had missed the line, and where in that vast expanse of forest to the south was he to look for him? For a minute he was minded to give up and turn back, but he set his teeth doggedly and moved forward again. Better forward than backward. There was a chance, a faint chance indeed, that his chief had struck the line farther on.

Three hundred yards more and he shouted as he bent above a spray of evergreen beside the cutting. Half hidden beneath the protecting branch his keen eye had detected the scarcely discernible outline of part of a snowshoe, the tail pointing south. It was plain that Tyler, having crossed the line below the bare swell of the ridge, had swung around to the east and come north again to strike it. Had he missed it again? If not, all might yet be well.

So on again with hope renewed. A broken branch hung dangling man-high across the track, and the break shone fresh and yellow. Blackstock shouted again, for he knew that his man was ahead.

And now in front he saw once more the hateful whirling cloud which told of open spaces and the maddening torture of the snow-laden gale. He swore softly, set his teeth and plunged into it, fighting his way forward, step by step, breathless, chilled to the very marrow of his bones, but undaunted. For a couple of hundred yards he struggled on and then again the friendly bush rose before him.

Once within it he set himself to find the line, moving slowly northward, for instinct told him that his course had been too far to the south. Again a dangling branch some yards to his right caught his eye and he made for it. A great weight was lifted from his heart, for he knew that Tyler had crossed that deadly furlong in safety. That was what he had dreaded—that somewhere behind him, under those ever shifting mounds of white, the body of his chief might be lying.

And something else he saw which told him that his quest was nearly ended. Beneath the branch, running southeasterly away from the line, was the partly obliterated track of a man on snowshoes; a track that wavered here and there in direction and was eloquent of weariness and hesitation;

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the track of a man who had hopelessly lost his way and was walking blindly forward.

Not more than an hour could have elapsed since that track was made, or the heavy snowfall would have surely smoothed it out as it had done all footprints on the other side of the clearing. From the time Tyler had left the western bush until he again found shelter a considerable period must have passed and during that time he had doubtless been fighting his desperate way hither and thither through the hell in the open.

Once, twice, thrice Blackstock sent his mighty voice reverberating through the forest, but no answering shout came back, and like a hound on a hot scent the big man sprang forward on the trail. In one place two snowshoe prints, side by side, told where the man ahead had stopped to rest his shoulders against a trunk. In another the displacement of the snow on a fallen tree showed where he had sat down. More wavering and uncertain became the line, and at last, fifty yards ahead, Blackstock saw what he had been every minute expecting—a heap of scarlet huddled on the snow.

Tyler lay where he had fallen in his tracks, his legs drawn up and his head pillowed on one arm, sleeping the deadly snow-sleep from which no man awakens of his own accord in this life.

Like a child in the powerful arms which caught him up, his slender body was vigorously shaken to and fro and objurgations shouted in his unheeding ear. Brandy was poured delicately between the clenched teeth, and at last the heavy eyelids rose and the eyes stared, half unseeing, at the seamed face bent above them. Gradually recognition dawned and a faint wonder overspread the waxen features.

"You?" whispered Tyler. "*You?*"

"Yes, me!" shouted Blackstock. "Who else? Wake up, man, wake up, if you ever expect to see your home and Monica again!"

He dragged the limp form to its feet and again shook it vigorously. "Rouse, man, rouse!" he cried. "Look here! Will this put life into you?"

He dragged out his locket, opened it and held it up before the dull eyes, which brightened a little as they rested on the portrait.

"Where did you get that?" Tyler whispered.

"All in good time," replied Blackstock cheerily. "What we have to think about now is getting back. And first a bit of fire to bring the life back into our veins."

A sheet of bark, ripped from a near-by birch, a handful or two of dry sticks, and in a few minutes a cheerful blaze was leaping up, with the snowflakes hissing in it as they fell.

"Where did you get that picture?" asked Tyler again, as he sat staring dully into the fire. "And why did you risk your life for me after the way I have treated you?"

Blackstock sprang up and held out his hand to assist the other to his feet.

"Come," he said. "There are many things to be said between you and me, but this is not the place. Wait till we get back. Can you make the camp if I show you the way?"

"I don't know," replied the other apathetically. "I am very tired—but I will try." And, obedient as a child, he fell in behind his leader, dragging his snowshoes heavily.

Outside the cook-tent a little group stood staring into the storm as they had stood at intervals for hours.

"Such madness!" said Bronson for the twentieth time. "How could Blackstock, good bushman as he is, ever hope to find Tyler in such a hell as that! And if he does find him, the chief will never be able to stand the journey back."

"If he finds him," said Marryatt, "Blackstock will bring him. I know him. He's the kind of man who does what he sets out to do."

"Look!" cried the cook, pointing with trembling hand. "What is that? It is moving."

Through the drifts something vague, shadowy, took shape. Another moment and it became the figure of a man, stooping low, with a red bundle hanging across one shoulder. A shout went up which rose high above the shriek of the gale, but no answering voice came. Only the figure lifted its head and looked at them, and then, letting its burden slide from its shoulder, fell heavily face-downwards in the snow.

"Blackstock," said Marryatt next morning, coming into the sleeping-tent where the big leveler after a sound night's sleep was just kicking off the blankets, "Tyler is awake. He wants to know if you can go in and see him."

"Sure," responded Blackstock, leaping up and hurrying on his clothes. "How is he?"

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"Pretty shaky, and that frozen left hand is bothering him a good deal. Otherwise he is all right. He has got his wits back and he's been talking to Bronson."

Tyler, lying on his camp-bed, pale and shaken, took the hand which Blackstock extended and gripped it hard.

"Blackstock," he said, "I owe you my life!"

"That's all right, old man," replied the other. "It's a good job you don't weigh much, or we might both have been lying out there yet."

"You make light of it," replied Tyler, "but I can't. I have been hearing about it from Bronson."

There was a long pause, and then Tyler spoke again: "I don't remember much of what occurred," he said, "but I remember one thing. Would you mind telling me where you got that portrait?"

"It was sent to me," was the brief reply.

"By whom?"

"By an old friend."

"Do you know the original?"

"I used to," said Blackstock rather sadly. "I have not seen her for a long time."

"I ask," continued Tyler, "because I think I have a right to ask. That is the portrait of the girl I am going to marry."

Blackstock nodded. "I know it," he said. "I didn't know it before yesterday. I came into this tent to get some brandy, and when I opened your dunnage-bag I saw the photograph. There was a letter there, too, and I read it."

"Read it?" cried Tyler, starting up on one arm. "Read my letter?"

"I had no right to read it, I know," replied the other, "but it was done almost before I knew. I owe you an apology, but—anything concerning Monica Allingham affects me very closely."

Tyler regarded him with suspicion in his eyes.

"What is Monica Allingham to you?" he asked harshly.

"She is my daughter," was the quiet reply.

An hour later Blackstock and Tyler came out of the tent together, the leveler's arm hooked affectionately within that of his chief.

"Bronson," said Tyler, "you will have to run the show till they send some one in my place. You can combine the duties of chief and transitman for a few days, and Marryatt will run the level."

Marryatt's face fell. "I?" he asked in astonishment. "Blackstock is not going now, is he?"

Tyler laughed. "Yes," he said, "he is going with me."

"Where are you going?" asked the other two with one voice.

Blackstock and Tyler looked at each other, smiling, and together they made the same reply:

"Home."

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Yellow Men and Gold

by Gouverneur Morris

Author of "The Voice in the Rice"

SYNOPSIS: James Parrish, who has achieved an unsatisfying literary success, finds in the gully next his cottage in San Mateo, California, a man dying from stab-wounds who entrusts him with papers giving the location of a sunken Spanish treasure-ship near the Straits of Magellan. Carrol, a neighbor, with three friends, ostensibly preparing for a trading cruise, drug Parrish, steal his papers and throw him into the hold of the *Shantung*, a trading schooner owned and manned by a company consisting of twelve Chinamen and one white woman, Mrs. Bessie, who treat him kindly. He remembers the location of the lost treasure and lays its quest before the Shantung Company.

CHAPTER VIII

LICHEE

MY EYES were no sooner wide open than Bessie came up to me, smiling as upon a child, and, "Now, sir," she said, "stand up!"

So I stood up, very weakly, and said that I was waiting for orders.

"Well," she said, "draw a deep breath—try to burst yourself—that's the way—and now hold it, as long as you can—there, that'll do; and now let it out, as slow as you can. It's to give you the right kind of an appetite and everything," she said.

"It makes me dizzy," I said.

"Never mind that," said she; "do you see how it's done?"

"Yes," I said.

"Then," said she, "I'm going below; and you'll go on breathing as I've showed you till you get your clothes off, and then you'll go and stand in the lea-scuppers, and the boys will look after you. Now," she said, "don't look obstinate. It's for your own good—pah—no wonder you're sickly!" She turned away impatiently, and when she had disappeared I began, not, however, without hesitation, compunction and a feeling that I was playing the fool, to breathe as she had directed and to strip off my much-creased and bedraggled clothes. And presently, shivering in the wind, naked as

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Adam and frightfully ashamed of my thinness, I advanced trepidantly upon three Chinamen, who, smiling broadly, appeared to be awaiting me in the lea-scuppers. These three, suddenly and without warning but with loud grunts and exclamations, seized me and commenced to brush me strongly with dry, bristly brushes. They went over me from head to foot with a kind of good-humored fury until from cold I passed to warm, from warm to fever; and then, just as I thought the intention was to skin me alive, the brushing ceased, the three sprang aside, and I received full upon the back a bucket of ice-cold water thrown with violence.

With a cry between pain, fear and rage, I turned, only to receive a second bucket in the open mouth. Turn and start and twist as I would, there was nothing for me but laughter and water, and behold, at the very moment when I felt about to die, I began to enjoy myself! And when that sudden and violent bathing was at an end and I stood, streaming sea-water and glowing like a new-cast statue, I felt in my whole being an exhilaration and freedom from care that were wonderful.

But now they came at me with great handfuls of cotton waste, such as is used for cleaning brass, and scrubbed me dry; and then one flung me a kind of pajama suit of thin white cotton; and, being clothed in this, another brought a razor and fresh water and soap and shaved me delicately and quickly. And then they made me drink down a great bowl of water and went about their business smiling.

Bessie now came out of the cabin leading by the hand a little boy. He was dressed in amazing contrast to the Chinamen and to Bessie herself. Indeed, he looked like a miniature viceroy, or princeling, just out of the band-box; from the little skull-cap of brocade with its jade button, to the snow-white socks (or rather mittens, for the big toe had a compartment to itself) he was the pink, I am sure, of Chinese fashion, and the mold of form. He was in a bright sky-blue silk jacket, with white silk bands to the wide sleeves and white cording low around the throat.

This celestial little garment had been embroidered by witchcraft with butterflies in wonderful soft tints and shades, and birds and flower-pots with flowers growing out of them; and green puppy-dogs with round popping eyes; and little high-arched bridges that crossed streams and led to pagodas and temples; and a thousand and one devices, exquisite in themselves and forming as a whole an effect of magical jeweling. Trousers of a clear, bright green silk, wrapped at the ankles and thrust into the aforementioned white socks, completed the costume; or rather it was completed by the child himself. There was a gravity upon his jolly round face, and a majesty—may I say so?—to his grave, toddling sea-waddle that were the very essence of the picture. He was like a Chinese advertisement of a health food, and as he came toward me, one hand in Bessie's and one resting gravely upon his portly little "tum," famished as I was, I could have cried aloud for joy.

Chinese he seemed from head to toe, but when, after looking gravely in my face for some moments, his sloe eyes closed suddenly and he put back his head and laughed a treble ghost of that haw-haw-haw of Bessie's, I knew that he belonged to no country, and to no race of men.

Bessie looked me gravely in the eyes.

"Saves a world of explanation," she said, "doesn't it—that laugh? Stop laughing, Lichee, you little monkey!"

Lichee broke short off.

"Time Melican man eat," said he.

"Lichee," said I, "you are delightful in conversation."

"Yes," said Bessie, "you're to have food now, on two conditions."

"A thousand!" I cried eagerly.

"First," said Bessie, "you've got to say you liked your bath—we heard him yell, didn't we, Lichee?—and second, you'll chew every mouthful you eat forty times."

"But why?" said I. "Is it a religious rite?"

"No," said Bessie quietly, "it's to make a man of you—and when you're that you can talk about religion. It sickens me to think how you've neglected yourself. Bright enough you are, too, by the shape of your head, to know better! I'd rather see a good solid bar-room drunk than a library skeleton. Come now, shake hands, and forget it!"

She smiled very winningly and we shook hands.

"Melican man eat now?" said Lichee.

"Oh, my friend, my friend!" I cried. And had he been my own I could not at that famished moment have loved him more.

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CHAPTER IX

BESSIE'S STORY

I WAS soon enthusiastically taken up with physical training. From the very first the brushings and the violent baths, the light diet, much chewed, the frequent great drafts of water, and the strong sea air had stirred within me and were bringing to liveliness the germs of health and well-being.

But you will not suppose that the experience with Carrol and his friends was ever long out of mind; nor that I awaited with anything but impatience the decision of the Shantung Company upon the affair of the treasure. They regarded me, after Bessie had told them of it, with an open interest and perhaps a tinge more of zeal in attending to my needs and comforts; and they made me feel that I was no waif upon their charity, but one who paid, or at the least made creditable promises of payment, for what he got.

But not a word of pro and con upon the adventure itself was to be heard from one of them, nor do I think that they discussed the matter among themselves. I was suffered to come and go as I pleased; and was encouraged to take a light share in such work as swabbing down the decks, and even learned to stand a trick at the wheel. Nor was I allowed to stand aside when it came to amusements.

"They look up to you," said Bessie to me once, "because you are an author; writing is sacred to the Chinese, pretty near; or at least it's the very tip-top thing in good manners; and these boys aren't the Canton coolie type anyway; they're North Chinamen, well educated, some of them; and they've a pretty snug inkling of what's what."

"They're certainly different from the Chinamen I've seen in America," I said, "taller, and thicker-necked. They don't look so much like delicate birds. And I've never been kinder used by any one—but that, of course, is owing to you."

We were slipping along upon a brisk beam wind, with a pleasant bubble of water under the bows and under the leeward rail, while the foam whirled and sudded in our wake. Lichee was in the galley composing sweetmeats with a little help from the cook; Wong was at the wheel, steering with two fingers; Chang and Jili were stripping the morning's wash from the windward rigging; and there was a pair of checker players in the shadow of the foresail. But otherwise we had the deck pretty well to ourselves.

"Mrs. Bessie," I said, "just what is the Shantung Company?"

"Do you notice," said she, "that they're all about the same age? Well, they were all students together in some Chinese college and they had advanced views about politics, and China began to get unpleasant for them. So they clubbed together and bought this schooner of a sealer that had to go to jail; and she's been home and country to them ever since. They swore an oath of partnership—to stick together, sink or swim, and to share and share alike—good luck, bad luck, and the whole hog."

"And you, Mrs. Bessie?" I said, after a pause.

"You've *looked* that question more than once," said she, "and you've thought this and you've thought that, till you don't know where I stand on the ladder that has its head at heaven's gate and its feet in hell-muck. . . . Chang's father willed me an interest in the Company and other interests that were nabbed when he died. He was a good man by his lights; all white under the yellow. . . . I know what they think in Christian countries about white girls that marry Chinks; but I've a bit boy that looks up to me and honors me, and twelve good men and true——"

"Thirteen," I corrected. "Not that I want to boast."

She gave me a grateful look.

"Mrs. Bessie," I said, "I'm curious as any woman. But I'm no cat. I'd dearly love to have the whole story. Am I going to?"

"It's long," she said doubtfully. "And it's some tough."

"And take my word for it," said I, "that somewhere there's a lot that's fine in it."

"I married," she said, "when I was seventeen. He was all kinds of a man, Willy was; ten years older than me; and gentle as they make 'em, and white clean through. He was a born athlete, and a made one—" She smiled: "That's how I come to be such a trainer. At first we lived in 'Frisco, and saved a little money. Then Willy thought he saw a chance to make money in Shanghai—he was a kind of small contractor and there was a boom in building. We went out—that was seven years ago—and Willy'd no sooner got there than he bid for a con-

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tract to put up a house in the English section—just a little two-story house, but with a good profit in it.

"We kept house in two rooms just on the edge of the Chinese quarter, and I was happy all day long, even when Willy was away looking after his contract. I guess a woman's happiest when she's seeing one man, or looking forward to seeing him, and knows he'll come to her sober and gentle and loving.

"There was only one thing we wanted, and that was a kid; but there was nothing doing. Willy got mixed up in local athletics, and boxed and swam races and played ball when he had the chance. And sometimes we'd hire a couple of ponies—we couldn't either of us ride to save our necks—and go rides in the country. One day Willy got off at a piece of old wall to see how it was put together. He said it was 'curious construction,' that was his word. And I told him not to go near the old thing, because it would fall on him. But he smiled and went up close to the wall and poked it and looked it over and got out his note-book to make a sketch—and then I saw the thing totter, and I screamed; and Willy jumped, but not quick enough. He was pinned by the legs, and by the time I got to him he had fainted dead away. I got some Chinamen that were working in a field to help me, and we got the stones off his legs, and they got a couple of poles and made a kind of litter and carried him back to the city. Once Willy opened his eyes, and said 'curious construction.' But the rest of the time he was unconscious.

"I gave those Chinamen all the money I had, because they'd acted so white, and had in the best doctor in Shanghai to look at Willy. He looked and went away and came again with another doctor and a nurse, and they cut one of Willy's legs off at the ankle and the other above the knee . . . but he didn't get well. He just seemed to live, and that was all. They said his back was hurt, and his insides, they thought, but weren't sure. Willy's contract went to pot, and the money mixed up in it.

"I saw the consul, and told him we were stone broke, and he said he'd do what he could. It wasn't much. He said he'd have Willy put in a free hospital, and get me a job as chambermaid in an English family he knew, or buy me a steerage passage home, whatever I chose. But I couldn't keep Willy on chambermaid wages, and I wouldn't leave him, and I told the consul so. He kind of hemmed and hawed and looked around to see if any one was listening, and then he says: 'Look here,' he says, 'what if I were to pay you eight dollars gold a week?' 'Well,' says I, 'what if you were?' Before he got more than six words out of his mouth I grabbed the heavy ruler that was on his desk and brought it down on his white head. And the last I saw of him he was face down among his papers, bleeding like a stuck pig.

"He didn't prosecute in the courts; but he prosecuted behind my back—gave me a bad name and said I'd made certain propositions to him that had shamed his white hairs. And he took care that nobody should help me or employ me. And a day or so later the tradesmen—I guess he set 'em on—began to want their money and I didn't know where to turn.

"Well, one morning an old Chinaman come to see me. He was old as the hills, and the brocades on him were worth a thousand dollars gold if they were worth a cent. He had two servants, one to carry his fan and purse and umbrella, and one to roll cigarettes for him; he smoked 'em as fast as they could be rolled. He was a wonderful looking old guy; he had black-rimmed specs three inches across and perfectly round, and there wasn't a level patch of skin on his face—it was just ten hundred million little wrinkles. He talked good English—the best I ever heard a Chinaman talk. He began by saying that he was seventy years old and that I mustn't be angry with him at anything he said.

"He said he'd heard about me and all my troubles and how my own people wouldn't help me; and that he himself, being a sporting man, had come to make me a proposition. He said he'd pay me fifteen dollars gold a week—no writing, just his word and mine—as long as Willy lived. He said he'd seen the doctor, and the doctor said Willy might live, and might not. If Willy lived a year the contract ended, with good wishes on both sides. But if Willy died, I was to become the property of the old Chinaman. He said his chief business was buying pretty girls and 'placing them,' he called it. I said, 'What if *you* die?' and he said the bank would go on paying the money just the same, for a year, but that I wouldn't be bound to anything. Well, I thought it over. It sure was a sporting proposition on the old

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Chinaman's part, and I was just as sure that Willy would live! And if he didn't—why, it didn't seem to matter what happened to me.

"Every week the money come in regular by messenger from a Chinese bank; and once in a while Hoang Lo, which was the old fellow's name, sent me a basket of fresh eggs with his compliments, and called once to say that he only sent me eggs because if he sent anything else I'd be afraid he'd put poison in it for Willy.

"It was having broken his contract that killed Willy as much as anything. He was that honest, sir, and open; he just couldn't bear it. But he lived long after the doctor said he would. It seemed as if he knew that he had to live a year to make things come out right for me. But of course he didn't know.

"When the 'leventh month was under way I began to see a good deal of Hoang Lo. He came pretty nearly every day, and he was that kind and generous that I got to think a lot of him. That's funny, Mr. Parrish. He was planning to set me well along the downward path, and yet I got to like him and look forward to his visits and his talk. He was wise. And he saw how I felt about Willy—that nothing else mattered, and he got fond of me.

"Two days before the year was up, Willy began to sink. He roused up enough to say good-by and to give me a lot of advice about what to do when he wasn't there any longer to look after me! And I said yes to everything, and promised everything he asked, if only to make his mind easy about me. About sundown that night he got unconscious, and though he didn't die just then, he never spoke again.

"When Hoang Lo learned that poor Willy was sinking, he came round at once. And he had a smile on him that wasn't 'Now I've got you' or 'I told you so' or 'You lose, I win' or anything like that. It was the smile old friends put on when they're sorry, too. He said that he would bring a Chinese doctor who had studied in Germany to see Willy, if I'd only believe that it wasn't just a scheme to put the finishing touches to Willy before the year was up. I trusted the old man and it pleased him.

"When the Chinese doctor saw Willy and took his pulse he just shook his head. He said Willy couldn't get well; there was no use bothering. He said, though, when Hoang Lo asked, that oxygen and electricity might keep life flickering on for a day or two. And then what does the old Hoang Lo do but give orders to have Willy kept alive as long as possible and not to spare any expense! So the Chinese doctor he sent for oxygen and things and his slippers, and stayed by Willy till the end. . . . And the end came six hours after the year was up.

"I'd dried all my tears out weeks before. I was that tired with watching and grieving—I just collapsed.

"Hoang Lo made all the arrangements for burying Willy, and paid for them. Then he waited till I was able to talk. And then he said he knew I'd have kept my contract if Willy hadn't lived, and that he always was at the service of honorable persons. What was I going to do now? I said 'It was through you he lived out the year. God bless you, Hoang Lo, you did what you could for us; you're dead white. The letter of the contract's broken, I know. But it's a quibble of your making.'

"He just smiled. He said that long since he'd made up his mind that I wasn't any common trash to be sold for so much gold. He said I was a pearl, not a woman. And first thing I knew, the old fellow had proposed matrimony as honorable as a Chinese can. Maybe if I'd been myself I'd have turned him down, but I was sick with watching and waiting and I was sick with fever, too, though I didn't know it at the time. And I suppose it came to me that marrying a Chinaman old enough to be my grandfather wasn't like marrying a young one. The last I remember till I came to my senses weeks later in Hoang Lo's house—and he had tan-bark spread in the street to stop the noise—was dropping at his feet and crying against his knees, and his hand patting my shoulder."

The honest tears streamed down Bessie's face, and for some minutes she could not go on.

"Well," she said, "Lichee came and old Hoang Lo died, and left a big property to Chang and the kid and me; but the viceroy kicked up a political mess and robbed right and left, until we had nothing to fall back on but the Shantung shares.

"Now you've heard the whole of my hard-luck story. And whether I acted right or wrong doesn't matter a hang. But I do know that having made my bargain, it was right for me to stick to it—and try to be cheerful in it—and now the boys are hap-

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pier and more content for my presence on this ship, and kinder. Do I look after them all, the best I can, and nurse them when they're sick and laugh them out of the sulks and keep them away from drugs—or don't I? As Gawd's good, Jim Parrish, I think I've done as well by my circumstances as many a luckier woman has done by hers! What the people who sit up to judge forget is just this: that Gawd's so bright he can shine light down into the blackest hole! And it's not Tom, Dick or Harry that can stop him, Mr. Parrish, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it."

She had become very vehement, and her eyes shone with a splendid valorous look, and dared me, as it were, to contradict her. But nothing was further from my mind; I had for her at that moment but one feeling, and that was unshakeable admiration. For it seemed to me that the outcast shone very brightly out of the darkness into which she had been thrust.

CHAPTER X

TWO SIDES OF A RESCUE

HAD Lichee been wholly white he must have been outrageously spoiled; but the thousands of generations of courteous and polite children that lay behind him on the one side were not easily to be shunted off. I may say, I think, that for a Chinese child he *was* spoiled; but as white children go, he was an angel. Always there was to be found one of the Shantung Company in a playful mood, ready to carve potatoes into dragons; to make and fly a kite off the stern; to ride him pick-a-back, or to roll and wrestle with him upon the deck. Or he might, if he liked, go aloft in a wicker basket for all the world like a bright little, fat little bird in a cage.

In a world where his word was law, Lichee never sulked; and, in a position to command, had his way most often either by circuitous intriguings or by the most direct, frank and engaging begging. The bowels of those yellow men yearned over the child; and I must believe that the parts of him that were Bessie—the rollicking, infectious laugh, the sudden wistfulness, the sturdy fearlessness, had drawn them a little from their own civilization toward ours. There was many a burst of gaiety aboard the *Shantung*, many a kind and thoughtful deed, many a well engineered surprise party with the giving of pleasure for its object, and many a merry joke was passed for the sake of joking. I have seen better moralists who were less kind; richer men who were less generous; ministers of the gospel who, take them for all in all, have seemed to me less Christian. And I am quite sure that I have never been thrown among men who were so clean; so zealous to tub; so indefatigable with the tooth-brush. As for little Lichee, when he was not dressed like a fairy-story he was naked as a cherub, now snowy with lather and now streaming with rinsings.

For my part I began, as Bessie said, "to flesh up," to develop a latent, distinct, if awkward, celerity, and to grow strong in the muscles. If only for that I blessed the woman; but I had stronger reasons to bless her—for a newer, franker, honester outlook upon life; for a strengthening of heart and moral courage. Indeed, as the saying is, I was by way of becoming a new man; the air looked no longer like torn and dirty lace to tired eyes; the sea-water washed the tired lines out of my face; and the strong fresh wind from the west blew color into my cheeks. I learned to wrestle a little; to get a little way up a swinging rope; and to balance a broom upon my chin (a fine exercise, by the way, in a rolling sea).

To keep the mind on edge, I began to pick at Chinese, and, thanks to a prodigious power for remembering, was soon on terms of equality with—Lichee. Beyond that, however, I discovered the road into the celestial tongue to be thorny, steep and abounding in blind alleys. But the formidable efforts that I made got me into better liking and put me upon terms of real friendliness with my teachers. English, though, remained the chief medium of intercourse, for, as Jili courteously remarked, "You think Chinaman no good Melican talkee; me think you hellee dam bad Chinaman talkee."

It was not till we were off the Isthmus, stewing in a kind of unexpected doldrums, that the Shantung Company called a meeting to which I was not invited and at which, so Bessie hinted to me as she went forward with the others, the matter of the treasure was to be seriously considered. I was sent for after about an hour and asked to repeat as much of the famous paper as I could remember; the items of treasure, and as much as possible of the note at the end.

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After the naming of each item—and I had the most of them pretty pat—Bessie translated into Chinese, but none of the men interrupted or commented in any way.

When I had finished with the items and with the note at the end I was asked for my own personal beliefs in the matter; heard without comment, and sent aft. I had more the feelings of one whose veracity is at stake than of one whose personal fortunes hang upon a hair.

Yet anxiety upon the latter point kept me moving—impelled me to affect a calmness that I was far from enjoying; to examine with sudden interest the spokes of the wheel; to test with a finger-nail the rigidity of the sun-softened pitch between the deck planks; and to scan from time to time the westward weather for signs of a returning wind.

To say that the *Shantung* was without motion and the sea smooth as a lake would not be strictly true; yet what way she had was by the stern, and so broad, so roundly molded and slow going were the ocean swells that you could not have said to the moment when the schooner finished riding and began to fall. The damp, scorching atmosphere was unsealike, and suggested (though there was nowhere to be seen any thickening along the eastern horizon that might have been land) the proximity of Panama with its hammering sun and its tumultuous vegetation. Twice in New York City I have felt a similar wet, burning heat; once in the hot room of a Turkish bath, and once as a little child in Trinity church of an Easter morning. Upon that latter occasion, moistly clasping a little palm branch, I had fainted away, to my father's intense mortification. And now, looking over the stern and seeing an actual palm branch floating in the water, the whole scene was recalled to me with the vividness of a view thrown suddenly upon a blank sheet by a stereopticon.

I remembered, too, with a certain dismalness, how my father, from the vivid heights of a health that was almost gross, had used to cut at my puniness with his sharp, ever-ready tongue. Yet here was I, whom the doctor had so often given up, a picture of so much health as is consistent with leanness; and there, in old Trinity graveyard, dead before the prime of life, lay the corpse of my father, who had thought to bow the whole world by sheer strength of mind and body, and to live a hundred years. I remember he used to plant acorns that his old age might be solaced with the majesty of oaks; and yet at this writing the tallest of those trees is no higher than the grave is deep.

The *Shantung*, impelled by a deeper current, perhaps, leisurely overhauled the palm branch as it passed slowly forward, almost grazing her side. The thing itself must have seemed desirable to Lichee, and its proximity an irresistible temptation. The bright flashing of the child's gay jacket, seen with the tail of an eye, had broken my revery; I looked up in time to see him jab cumbersomely at the branch with an unwieldy boat-hook and, his round face expressing solemn surprise rather than fear, topple slowly over the low rail into the sea.

I ran for the spot, with no very definite idea what I should do when I got there; stubbed one naked foot cruelly against a ring bolt, and, by a dive as clean as it was unpremeditated, entered the water almost on top of the struggling child. My left hand, indeed, must have passed under his jacket, or become entangled with him in some way; anyhow I dragged him under with me, and our reappearance together had all the hall-marks of a *bona fide* rescue.

Yet all was not well. The child was unconscious; we were a dozen feet from the schooner's side; my left arm, wrenched backward against the impetus of the dive by the resistance of Lichee's stationary weight, was useless; indeed, half full of sea-water and consternation, I must, if left to myself, have gone down with the boy. Yet help was near; for my sound arm in its thrashing fell suddenly with jarring violence upon the boat-hook, and that straw's worth of additional buoyancy preserved us. A second more and the half of the Company were around us, swimming like yellow-faced seals and completing the work of rescue which I had accidentally begun.

The incident, and the praise with which I was overwhelmed, were the more distasteful from the fact that, if I had not tripped, I might have reached Lichee from the schooner's deck, and rescued him neatly, without so much as wetting my shirt-sleeves. I tried religiously to defend myself from praise; explained the whole affair to Bessie again and again at the top of my voice, but all to no purpose. I could no more have persuaded those grateful hearts that I was not the saver and restorer to them of

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their mascot than that I was the Emperor of China in disguise. Added to their gratitude was admiration for the presence of mind that in the midst of peril, in the very jaws, as it were, of sharks and sea-devils, had not omitted to rescue so insignificant an object as a boat-hook.

But the true importance of the incident to this narrative is that it served to make up the Shantung Company's mind about the treasure. As a mere favor, Bessie said, they would now have gone for me through a thousand thousand hells.

As for Lichee, he was not long coming to, and having thrown up the sea-water which he had swallowed, signified that if he might become the undivided possessor of a clasp-knife such as grown men use, he would think favorably of continuing to exist. Otherwise, we might as well look forward to the worst.

CHAPTER XI

IN A PIECE OF CHEWING-GUM

IN THE thought that having voted for treasure-hunting the Shantung Company would make quick work of their business in Lima I was mistaken. And when, in my impatience, I complained to Bessie that we were wasting precious time, she begged to differ, and soon had me in agreement with her.

"If you think the boys are loitering," she said, "let me tell you what Chang says. He says he knows the *Calliope*, of old, for a rotten, slow-going tub. If she *has* got a start of us, by this time, and if she *does* get to the place ahead of us, who cares? Will they get that stuff out of the mud under one month—two months? I ask *you*. And every two-bit piece that they *do* get up, before we blow in, is just so much in our pockets for the trouble of taking it."

"Why, Bessie," said I, "wouldn't they have something to say about that? My idea was to get there before them and lift the stuff and vanish—leaving a few good guesses behind."

"That was your idea, was it?" she said with some asperity. "Well, the sooner you forget it the better. There is just one chance in a million of getting through the business without a fight. That's reason *one* for delay; Chang's trying to get hold of a second-hand Maxim and some Winchesters —we've only a couple aboard. Reason two, we're fitted for the tropics, or 'Frisco at the worst. Nice you'd look in those cotton pajamas sitting on an iceberg! We're *got* to have warm clothes; and Chang's going to put a stove in the cabin and one in the forecastle. Reason three: who's going to do the diving, and how's it going to be done? If Chang can hire it done, you bet he'll hire it; if he can't, he's got to get hold of a diving-suit—two of them in case one breaks—and do the trick himself. Reason four: he's going to make the best dicker he can on the present job, in case the lost galleywest doesn't turn up. If that isn't sense, Jim, prove it! And if you don't, why put it in your pipe and smoke it!"

"Thanks," I said, "I'll smoke."

"Good," said Bessie. "Then climb into your shore togs and show me the town—will you? I'm kind of bashful about leaving the ship; and—but maybe you'd rather not be seen walking with me. Tell me the truth, Jim; I won't mind much."

"Bessie!" I cried indignantly, and hurried off to change my clothes. And when we got ashore—indeed Bessie had made herself very trig and smart for the occasion—we walked up from the wharves and promenaded the more fashionable streets, looking the parts of very usual travelers. Only somehow it seemed to me that Bessie was prettier than the run of white women in outlandish places, as I was surely taller and thinner than the average man. She had, too, an eye for color, humor and observation that would have done credit to a Davis or a Stevens; and I found myself seeing a thousand things that I must else have missed, and livening the hours of the Spanish siesta with joyous laughter. It was by no means my first trip ashore; for three weeks had passed since we anchored off the Peruvian capital; but it was the one that I shall best remember.

I had long since become accustomed to Bessie's careless and rough habit of speech; no longer sat in judgment upon her Chinese marriage; and thought her, as indeed she was, the very best friend I had in the world. She was the most sympathetic listener, the sanest, kindest adviser, the merriest companion, the most devoted mother, and the most distinguished example of making the best of things that ever I saw. A man could not have sailed long aboard the *Shantung* without making a confidant of Bessie. She

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would have your dearest secrets out of you in no time, and make them her own. Had I been a murderer, I must have told Bessie upon some night of stars; and the girl into whose face the little terriers looked was a piece of ancient history to her, yet one upon which she loved to harp. I had told her in the beginning that that jig was up, but she would have none of it; I was to go back to my own place, rich and strong, and to make the running with a high hand; yes, and at the wedding breakfast I should receive a telegram or a cable, unsigned, with the words "I told you so."

"'Now who told me so?' you'll say," said Bessie. "'Who was it, now?' And you'll put your mind to raking in the ashes of all you've ever done and been and known, and maybe you'll remember after a while and say: 'That was that woman on the *Shantung*.'"

"Yes," I said, "Bessie, I'll probably forget you quicker than any one I've ever known. There's nothing about you to impress a man, unless it's your general unkindness and bad temper!"

"I wonder," said Bessie, much mollified, "if you and she'll ever talk about me."

"If she and I ever talk together again in this world, Bessie," I said, "you'll be in it."

"Wouldn't mentioning me," said Bessie, "be—oh, like saying things that can't be said to young girls? Better cut me out, Jim, when you leave us,"

"When I leave you, Bessie?" said I. "And I'm not sure that the Shantung Company will ever see the last of me. When have I ever been so well—or so happy—or so kindly treated? Never, and never shall be again. If," said I jocosely, "you were a smoker, Bessie, I should tell you what to put in your pipe."

We were hungry, and tired with walking and the heat, so when Bessie, for I had not a cent of money, proposed chocolate and cakes, I felt that all would yet be well in the world. We selected a restaurant a trifle less filthy looking than most, and went in. The place was empty of guests, and we had our choice of tables. It was a cool, dark little room, in great contrast to the glaring streets; and it was some moments before I could accustom my eyes to the diminished light. Then, curiously enough, they focused upon a name that had been carved on the table at which we had sat down. With a finger that shook a little, I pointed out the name to Bessie.

"'*Espiritu Santo*,'" said she; "the name of the galleywest!"

"And look here," said I, making a fresh discovery, "'Roy Cunningham!' He was the man the paper was written for. He was the Crew man himself, most likely."

"And here's his name again," said Bessie, "in a heart, with another name—Carmen——"

"Yes," said I, "and here are his initials and a picture of something—I can't make out what, can you?"

"Why," said Bessie, "it's a diver's helmet, isn't it?"

"Either that," said I, "or a skull. His carving is better than his drawing. He must have sat often at this table, Bessie, with his girl, and his dream."

In the act of crossing one leg over the other my knee struck a hard knot under the table; upon investigation it came off in my hand, and proved to be a lump of hardened chewing-gum, and imbedded in the surface that had been flattened against the table was a paper, folded many times. We unfolded it, and read, in English:

I get your word and hide; but Carrol get me. He break my finger to make me tell—one after the other—but I not tell. And I not believe he think I know. He gone north after you. Something tell me you come back, and we sail once more and find that gold where we leave him. Carrol have me put in prison. I am just out. Some of my finger not bend, and are all grow crooked; but you not mind, my dear, not you? I have our baby in prison, but he is dead when he come. I think it is because Carrol hurt me so, and trample on me to make me tell. I love you forever. C——.

"My God!" said Bessie.

A shadow fell between us, and we looked up into the face of a woman, no longer young nor pretty, but with great stag eyes and wonderful white teeth. She reached a small distorted hand toward the paper.

"Carmen!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," she said, in a very pretty voice, with a soft Spanish accent. "Please put thata letter where you find him. That not mean' for you."

"Was it meant for Roy Cunningham?" I asked.

She scrutinized me for some time with her great stag eyes.

"What of it?" she said.

I rose and offered her a chair.

"Please sit down and I will tell you," I said, "why poor Cunningham will never get your letter."

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She sat down, all of a huddle, so to speak.

"Did Carrol kill him?" she asked presently in a quiet voice.

And I told her from the beginning all that I knew of the man guessed to have been Cunningham; of his murder; of his eyes and wounds opening at the approach of Carrol; and of those subsequent events that accounted for our meeting with her in the restaurant.

"Thata Roy," she said, "and Carrol kill him!"

And that was all she said for a time. Then, speaking very gently,

"I know you not friends with Carrol," she said. "I watch you from the door; and I see how them name on thata table estonishe you. Roy love to carve and whittle with his knife. And so you going after Carrol and thata treasure? I not care about thata treasure—that is for you— But I like—oh, that only jus' and fair that Carrol belong to me."

Her voice, tired and gentle, did not instil the last phrase with any particular meaning.

"Why?" said Bessie. "Why do you want Carrol?"

"Why," said the woman, "he not done you no harm—but you think what he do to me. And then ask me why I want of him for?"

She laid her two little hands, palm down, on the table so that we should see into what distortion and rigidity the bones broken by Carrol had set. They must have been once very pretty, clever little hands. But now, uncombative as I am by nature, the sight of them was like that of a red cloth to a bull. And I felt myself trembling from head to foot with the lust to hunt Carrol down and kill him.

"Those," said Carmen, "were my hands. They used to make the fine lace. Cunningham he my hosband, as thees ring, that I not get off now if I want, show. . . . You listen—" a certain vigor animated her gentle voice. "Roy and I pass our honeymoon in one litter bit sloop lookin' for thata treasure, jus' we two of us. It not so easy for to find; and when we find him, we can not get him up. We not expect do that. We are prospective, what you call him? and if we find there some treasure we are go to form the company, with Roy for leader, and go back to them place with divers and all. Roy dive down just as he is half a dozen time; but the water is too col' and deep, and we learn more with that sea-glass.

"The treasure-ship she have struck on a reef of rock and go down into a kind of bowl on the other side; that bowl is almos' clean rock, no mud, no sand to bury those things—just enough to help hol' them; and with that glass you can see ches's, and timbers, and casks, all atangled, and bone and skulls, and fishes dartin' amongs them—and that bowl have high side so that those things have not been wash out of it, or mos' of them. If it has not been for those network of timbers, Roy can have get much more; he only get two little bar of gold; and I not let him go down there any more; it is terrible to be all alone in that sloop while he dive; I can not stand the terror of him.

"Then we come back here; and met Carrol that Roy have known beforehan'. And he think Carrol was an honest man; and he tell him about that treasure, and the company is form'. But the agreement say that Roy is to have three-fourth of that treasure; and although Carrol agree and say that was fair, he make up his mind, as these hand show, to get the all of it, or the mos', for himself.

"There not time now to tell how he try to murder Roy then, and get that paper, and how he raise those authorities agains' Roy, and Roy have to escape out of this country. And Carrol follow him, after he is giving up try to make me tell. No time and no use. But listen: I not want that treasure; I only want Carrol. But I am of use to you: I show you the very place; and that not so easy to fin'; because there are days and days when it was too rough to use the glass; and you have search for weeks within a hondred feet of thata place, and not find him—it look easy; off the northwest corner of the islet in shallow water; but that not easy. It take Roy and me one month to find him——"

Bessie reached out and drew both the distorted little hands into one of hers, and fell to patting them with the other.

"Don't get excited, you poor little thing," she said, "and get to thinking we don't understand. Of course you want to go with us, and see Carrol's finish; and by the everlasting, you shall!"

Carmen's great eyes filled slowly with tears, and suddenly overflowed.

"If you're going to cry," said Bessie, "you can't go." And her own eyes filled and ran over; I think it was those poor little hands

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that did it. "And—and you can p-put that in your pipe, and smoke it!"

The women dried their eyes presently, and left the restaurant, walking hand in hand like two little children. And I followed them with feelings that I presume to be akin to those of an agitated parent.

CHAPTER XII

MAGELLAN AT LAST

ALTHOUGH we proceeded down the coast in a leisurely manner, anchoring sometimes for a day or two in the chief harbors, a spirit of excitement began gradually to pervade our whole ship's company; until finally Chang, disappointed from port to port in his efforts to secure a Maxim, and an experienced diver to go down in the suits bought in Lima, laid the *Shantung's* course for the western opening of Magellan's strait.

The bright weather of the tropics went a little farther with us; as in the country a hospitable host sees his departing guests along the road and stands at last waving and smiling until they are hidden beyond the turn. For an hour or two one day we could look back into bright blue Summer; while ahead mists were gathering, and the sea was a cold gray, and the sky. There was an end to happy-go-lucky sailing; and I began at last to appreciate the zeal and devotion of Chinamen to a cause; their delight in what is certain, and their contempt for chance. There seemed to be always some one aloft searching with microscope eyes for flaws in the rigging, greasing blocks and trying ringbolts; piece by piece the spare canvas was overhauled; the mast-stays, and indeed any main reliance or trifle that might be expected to play traitor and deliver us to the gales. Nor was the general welfare left to the individual when it could be helped; no one went long in wet clothes, whisky appeared from somewhere on that abstemious ship and was served three times a day like a tonic; the kettle boiled on the galley stove and each man made tea when he liked.

The weather along that last stretch of continent was neither so cold as I had expected nor so violent. The thermometer ranged in the middle forties; the wind from half to three parts of a gale; and of the infinitude of low-hanging gray clouds that swept over us, the one burst and the next passed without bursting. It did not rain all day; but some days it rained a hundred times; and if at times the clouds opened and showed a watery sun, it was seldom at high noon or apt for the navigator.

Yet of all the matters, great or minute, with which Chang was busied day and night (almost), those affecting the navigation of the *Shantung* appeared to give him the least anxiety. He was, with his charts and compasses and parallel rulers, his brushes, and cakes of India ink, and, most important of all, the wired frame with its movable beads upon which he could perform any miracle known to mathematics, the plus past master of dead-reckoning. He moved among those unknown seas and currents as certainly, as carelessly, you might say, as a librarian among his books; and only at those rare times when he could prove himself right to an inch by an observation did he display the ghost of an emotion. Then the fires in his black sloe eyes would liven for half a minute and play; or he might have been seen to catch Lichee by the foot and toss him for a double somersault, catching him amid the swing and toss of the ship with the gentleness of a woman and the certainty of fate.

But there was no time now for games and loafings and amusements. The *Shantung*, if never in actual jeopardy, was in the midst of perils and encountered many a chance of mischance; and the characters of the men that sailed her for all that was in them began to be revealed. Hitherto, except that Chang was the captain, and Jili the jester, if I may say so, I had seen little real difference between them. For weeks I had even thought them to look very much alike; but now it seemed that Jili was a nervous, anxious man, ready enough to do his duty, and manly enough for that matter, but prone to look with pessimism upon any unexpected opposition of the elements; always the first of the watch to be on deck, but not, I thought, so much from extra vigilance as from the inability to sleep soundly. And he who had always been the first to see or to perpetrate a pleasantry now wore the mask of a dismal and narrow spirit.

But Chang, in bright weather docile, I had sometimes thought, to the point of weakness, never forward in talk, but one who sits back and, yes, *giggles*, appeared now in a wonderful change of color. Into his voice, higher and more womanish than is common

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even among Chinamen, there came now the sharp and jarring note of command; and you sprang to obey, moved by the whole strength of your legs plus the impulse of his voice. The company met no more in council to vote upon this measure or that; for decision came from Chang, as lightning from a storm-cloud, and as overwhelmingly struck. I looked upon him no more as on a man of a particular race; but as upon the universal man, born prepared; he was the sea-man incarnate; the genius of navigation; a figure at once inspiring and formidable. So Columbus may have borne himself, or the indomitable Magellan himself among those very seas.

We knew one morning that in the afternoon we might expect to enter the famous strait, and I cast many an excited look into the gray, streaming weather for the exalted mountains that I believed to guard the entrance. Yet so thick was the weather that I despaired of catching more than a glimpse of that dramatic portal.

As we drew into the coast the wind became a monster to be reckoned with; baffled, I suppose, by the opposition of the southwest Andes, it blew now from the west and now from the east and now in ferocious circles. Once we jibed with a violence that I thought must have torn our masts out of us; and once the *Shantung* ran her bows under solid green water, and it seemed for a moment as if she must go to the bottom of the sea as a toboggan to the bottom of an iced slide. Sleet rather than rain bit the face and blinded the eyes; the rigging gave out sounds as of sudden loud singing, and the wind roared like a bull in the hollow of the ear.

It was about noon that Jili, who was at the wheel, gave a loud cry and jammed us suddenly into the eye of the wind, to hang a minute, and fill once more—and almost as suddenly—upon the starboard tack.

That he alone had seen the little sloop that now passed along our lee rail, almost colliding with us, must be attributed to the fact that all eyes were after mountain-tops rather than sea-levels. But it was lucky for all concerned that Jili had seen her in time to luff.

She was almost thirty feet on the water line; a fat, white, high-bowed little craft that, looking as if she was built of odds and ends of wrecks, behaved like a witch and tore over the great seas, under a mainsail reefed to the size of a bed-spread, like a dolphin. Her course was the same as ours; and before we had outfooted her I read the name *Sting-ray* upon her stern board, in great scrawly letters as if painted by an amateur of shipbuilding. She showed but one man; a middle-aged white man with a black beard tucked into the collar of his oilskin. He sailed his little ship by a ramshackle looking tiller, had a great black drooping pipe in his mouth, and as he came parallel with our stern he turned to us a mild, blue, interested pair of eyes and, freeing one hand, waved to Jili and smiled on either side of the pipe-stem, as much as to thank that paper-pale celestial for the timely and unspeakably necessary luff.

But it was Chang that had the most interest in the stranger; and he never took his eyes off that brave little ship until she had disappeared in the smother astern. Then, without a word, he turned, and himself relieved Jili at the wheel.

An hour later, trumpeting my hands, for the storm and the rain were making a deafening racket, I ventured to ask him a question.

"How near now?" I cried.

For answer he took an instantaneous hand from the wheel and pointed over his shoulder.

We had indeed passed the portals of the perilous strait without seeing them; but, suddenly, far to starboard, a cloud tore apart vertically like a sheet of paper, and in the swirling rift I saw, for one instant of time, a jagged peak white with eternal snow.

CHAPTER XIII

CHANG GEOLOGIZES

THE weather, gray, wet and cold, with high winds and sleet flurries, held up for one piping hot day of unimaginable calm and beauty. From dawn till dark we passed slowly onward between the mountains, their heads dazzling with the low-drawn snow; their feet quietly washed by waters of an equatorial blue; the valleys between them and their steep slopes clothed with somber forests. In one place a glacier of a bright tint of blue came nearly to the water's edge, and as we passed, a mountainous fragment broke from it and fell roaring. So great was the displacement that the waters rushed from it like a

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tidal wave and we were treated for some minutes to a nasty, chopping sea.

All that bright hot day we sailed among fragments of ice; among half-submerged rocks from which the dark sea-weeds streamed for hundreds of feet around; rising and falling with the undulations of the sea, like the hair of a swimmer's head. And in those cold deep waters there was abundance of life as in a tropical forest. Whales and dolphins and seals swarmed; shoals of little fishes passed just beneath the surface, like reflections of silver-lined clouds; vast rocks there were, white with sea-gulls, and even the albatross was no rare sight.

That night the sun went stormily down, his face sullen and crimson, like an angry person's; and we did not see him again for many days. The wind blew up a deluge of sleet and rain; clouds obliterated the mountains; the barometer went down like the sand in an hour-glass; and by midnight we called the women and Lichee, to have them prepared, in case of necessity, for the worst. But we passed through the danger of that night and two nights more, and then, even as we had entered the strait, in the same blither of sleet and mist and strong running seas, we left it and were in the Atlantic at last. Then we laid our course once more south, made the Harbor of Good Success at the entrance of the famous Beagle Channel and, having reached the threshold of our adventure, came to anchor for an earned and necessary rest.

Chang, upon whom the anxieties of the last perilous weeks had fallen, who had guessed, felt, divined a way, when for the most part there had been nothing to guide him, offered prayers of thanksgiving to the strange brass god in the forecastle—going down alone and remaining for two hours; he then smoked opium, prepared for him and urged upon him by Bessie; and lay down, an ugly open knife beside him which he swore to use upon the first man that disturbed his sleep, and slept for eighteen hours.

Meanwhile the wind abated, the rain stopped falling, and the weather cleared to a light sunless gray. Chang awoke, we weighed anchor, and sailed into Beagle Channel. The next day we proceeded under shortened sail, with a sharp lookout for signs of the *Calliope*. We might stumble upon her around any headland, and we chose, if possible, in the succinct American, "to see her first."

About noon the lookout thought he saw far ahead a schooner under full sail; but Carmen, looking long through telescoped hands, became very much agitated, and said that it was no ship but a vast discoloration upon the face of a headland; that she knew it well, now that she saw it, and that in the bay beyond that headland we should find the islet that we had come so far to seek.

As we drew upon the headland, excitement moved among us like some invisible agitator, whose oratory affects different persons in different ways. Chang became terse and morose, Wong displayed a shining face of greed; Jili talked and clattered incessantly like a child's rattle; Bessie had the crimson cheeks and the vivacious, dancing eyes of a girl at the threshold of her first ball; Lichee, perceiving opportunity, snatched it by the hair and dragged it with him into the deserted galley, picked the lock of the jam-locker, and was the first of our company to feel that he had not voyaged in vain.

Carmen, alone, in whom that familiar headland, recalling her lover and her honeymoon, must have stirred the ashes of past joys and suffering into flame, fell into her ordinary calm demeanor.

"Soon now," she said, "we shall eround into that bay and see that rock standing in the middle."

Yet we passed the great headland with its nature-faked schooner and found, it is true, an indentation like a narrow fiord that wound off into the cliffs, but no bay; and a smaller headland; only to find beyond that a third.

"I think after that one," said Carmen. But a fourth confronted us, and then a fifth.

"But it was here—right here. . . . It was right here," she kept saying. "I remember that fine clear day; and that schooner. . . . " And she became confused like a truthful person suspected of lying. Chang and his mathematics bore her out; but neither deep indented bay nor rocky islet appeared. Those minutes, in which what we had sought so far seemed not to be, were terribly trying. We spoke in whispers, as if afraid of waking some one, and were pale, one and all of us.

Where so many eyes, hopes and conjectures were straining forward, Chang alone appeared to be studying the nearby cliffs and steeps themselves, even applying a telescope to the work. He passed an hour thus,

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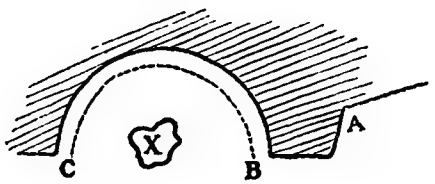
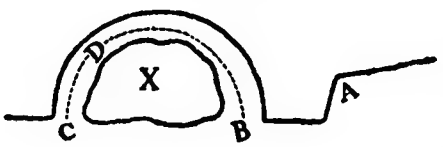
interested apparently; perplexed; but undiscouraged. Then, shutting the telescope, he went forward and was no sooner watchfully ensconced in the bows than we opened the mouth of just such a fiord as that beyond the first headland. Then was Chang a man transformed; his grave face wrinkled with smiles and he came bounding aft to the wheel, laughing shrilly. He headed the *Shantung* straight for the mouth of the fiord and, a quarter of an hour later, having discovered a suitable anchorage, himself wreathed in smiles, put her into the wind and gave the order to anchor.

I thought that the tempestuous and nerve-racking passage of Magellan had unhinged the man's mind; but not at all. He sent for his paint-brush, his cake of ink and a sheet of paper. Spreading the latter upon the deck, he knelt by it and, in a ring of completely puzzled faces, began to draw.

The first picture was something like this (only beautifully drawn), and when it was finished he explained. And in English that all might understand.



Touching with his finger the point that I have marked A, he said: "That white schooner ship on rock; all same now." Then running his finger along the dotted line B C, "Him old time bay," he said; and, "him,"—here his finger moved to X—"him lilly lock. Chang think lilly lock one time top side fire-mountain; Chang think earthquake come along and lift lilly lock out of bay." He drew a second picture.



Then, his finger back at X, "Lilly lock," he said, "now big lock; fill um old time bay full; not all full, leave lilly bit." And he moved his fingers along the channel B C; and then, pointing to D, "Chang think *Shantung* stop here; here now—" Here he sprang to his feet, and with sharp, quick gestures: "Chang think," he cried, "no dive down for gold; think climb up, and find him top side lilly lock; Chang look, and think old time lilly lock new time big lock; and Chang think him land now and look lilly more."

"What makes think new land, Chang?" I said.

For answer he pointed into the air, and said:

"See um old rotten whale, topside lilly cliff, all same sea-weed; Chang think earthquake raise um lilly lock; raise um bottom, raise um hell. Chang look and see lilly tlee [tree] all same size Lichee; all the lilly tlee; no see big tlee; Chang think land new, all same baby."

CHAPTER XIV

JERRY TOP

OPPOSITE the schooner, although the water in the fiord was smooth as a ribbon, it appeared impracticable to land or make an ascent; nor could we sail any farther owing to the dead calm that prevailed. But it was necessary to investigate Chang's theory of the former islet's having risen; and to find out whether Carrol and the *Calliope* were in the vicinity. So we got one of the boats overboard, and four of us embarked: Chang and I to go shore at the first favorable place and explore the land; Wong and A Fing to proceed cautiously along the fiord, returning for us about sundown.

I was still wondering why Chang had selected me to be his companion, when he gave an order and the boat was turned at right angles to her course and run head on for a shelving pocket of sand. From this point a wide fissure in the rocks ran backward and upward and appeared to lead easily and directly to the higher levels which we were desirous of gaining. And such, indeed, proved the case; and the ascent, even to a man encumbered with a heavy Winchester, was by no means difficult. At an elevation of, perhaps, a hundred and fifty feet we came out of the fissure upon a great space of rock and sand whose general level was broken by ridges and fissures.

That the formation had not been long out of water must have been evident to a child; mingled with almost any handful of sand

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were to be found pieces of fish-bone, and whole and fragmentary shells, the colors still bright and fresh upon them; the profusion of little beech trees two and three feet high, and no higher, was significant—a clean-picked skeleton of a seal or sea-lion disordered by the thrusting stem of a beech; these and a thousand other evidences went far to proving Chang's theory.

Levelish as the plateau was in general effect, and far as the eye carried, yet a thousand men might have been concealed within a stone's throw of us; and for this reason we kept as much to the hollows and below the surface, so to speak, as possible. In the midst, but far off, the plateau rose to a kind of truncated cone; and that, as the highest point visible, we conceived might be the old time islet itself; indeed, a sharp discoloration, extending horizontally and bisecting the cone's altitude, had even at that distance the look of an old high-water mark; and so sure was Chang that he elected to proceed no farther toward it at that time, but to strike across, at right angles, to the fiord and follow its windings from above. My impulse (and mine are seldom wise) was to hasten to the cone, prove it the ancient islet, find the cove where the galleon had sunk, and fill my pockets with treasure. But Chang, uniting as he did the boldness of a fanatic with the caution of a Hebrew, preferred first to locate Carrol and the *Calliope*.

Why I clung to the idea that we had nothing to fear from Carrol and his gang I do not know. Our own perilous voyage, perhaps, had to do with this, and the desolateness of the region in which we found ourselves. Because I saw no sign of man, I was ready to believe that none was to be seen, and yet at the very moment that I was imparting these unreasonable thoughts to the patient Chang there was a man within a dozen feet of us. And, as we learned afterward, he had never been much farther off during the whole of our exploration.

To reveal himself he chose a strategical opportunity, with a way of retreat in reserve. We were passing between two great rocks; he had climbed to the top of that on the right hand and was watching us, torn between timidity and loneliness. A pebble fell at my feet; I looked up and saw a copper-brown face that my astonished glance seemed to split into an immeasurable grin and to set bobbing up and down. I caught Chang by the arm, and he, too, looked up into that idiotically good-natured face. Black hairs, thick as wool, matted the individual's head; and black hairs, rare as in leprosy, stuck ridiculously from his chin. And he smiled and he bobbed and he bobbed and he smiled.

"Good afternoon," I said, and was astonished to be answered in English.

"Me well, thank you; me hope you very well."

"Who are you?" I asked.

"You not shoot, me come down and tell." He seemed to wait my answer nervously. Chang took the rifle out of my hands and laid it aside, together with his own. Then the grinning savage came out entire upon the top of the rock, and leaped down. He was a little, knotted, bow-legged man and, unless you count a withered looking twig with a few yellow leaves that he carried in one hand, absolutely naked. Now it must be remembered that although I had begun the conversation, it was to Chang as to the man of importance that the savage at once proceeded to address himself.

Well, there followed so comic a conversation in broken English that politeness alone kept me from splitting apart with laughter; but the subject of their discourse became presently serious enough to have sobered the most unredeemed buffoon.

The savage's English name was Jerry Top. He had sailed five years before the mast on a Yankee whaler, and hence his English and his civilization. Then, it seems, he had been beaten, unjustly, had leaped overboard in a snow-storm, and now behold him here. Oh yes, thank you, he lived very well. But he was very lonely. He had been a ladies' man in his day; a family man; indeed a man of many families. He wished very much to sail before the mast once more. God knew he was tired of living alone. Would we take him with us?

There were some men—and here his information became startling—over there. They had come in a schooner; and they kept putting different ones of them in a curious suit of clothes and dropping them overboard at the end of a rope. He did not know why. It *was* funny to see; but even he had tired of it, watching them from the cliff. He had approached them, and they were very bad men. They were not jolly; they never laughed. They were very bad. They had given him a — — good beating.

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But we were different; we looked like very jolly men. Had we any ladies aboard? He would be glad to see a lady—just to see one. He was terribly lonely. He became embarrassed and attempted to shield his countenance behind the twig which he carried.

Chang reached forward suddenly and took the twig out of the man's hand. He examined it a moment, and then passed it to me, his narrow slant eyes round with astonishment. And with reason, for the thing was no part of a vegetable growth, but a much battered specimen of wonderfully wrought and hammered gold. Chang turned to Jerry Top and smiled.

"You tell where find um," he said, "Chang take you way on ship; kind all same brother. Where you find um?"

Jerry Top turned and started off at full speed; but Chang overtook him.

"To-mollow," he said, "Go back ship now. Chang think lilly."

TO BE CONTINUED

The Mysterious Invitation

By Kathleen Norris

"AFTER all," philosophized Barry Williams, as he cast a sharply scrutinizing glance about the big hotel bedroom for some possibly overlooked possession, "after all, it has been a great holiday, and one mustn't expect too much."

One mustn't expect, in other words, that when Fortune has already bestowed youth and health and money, good position and a holiday upon one of her sons, she is bound in addition to gratify all his idle whims as they arise. Barry had been enjoying all these good things, more or less, all his life, and appreciated them, but these idle, happy weeks in Europe had been shadowed—oh, very faintly shadowed—by the lack of just one more.

He was alone on his travels and follow-

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ing no special outlined itinerary. No aunt dragged him through cathedrals, no sister pleaded for just another fortnight in Paris. Yet Barry was hopefully following, or rather longing to surprise, a lady. Not a flesh-and-blood woman, but the witching goddess of adventure, the goddess that had haunted the dreams he had dreamed and so many of the books he had read about Europe. Dreams and books that involved traveling adventuresses, shy and bewildered little countrywomen who were astray with luggage and tickets, Russian secret service men with mysterious valises, German princesses traveling incognito and not averse to a passing acquaintance with a handsome American, confused identities, lost papers of state, all the delightful and improbable elements, in short, that make for true romance.

So Barry got off the trains at all sorts of peculiar places, stayed at numberless odd little inns, talked to strangers in coaches, dived into lonely Italian alleys, eyed quiet, knitting goose-girls with an interest almost wistful in its intensity, and followed many a fluttering American petticoat to its unromantic haven with chaperone or mother.

All to no purpose. And now he was in Vienna, on the very last day of his holiday, and was thinking of his quest no longer.

He was to leave Vienna late that night, but the Winter charm and gaiety of the lovely city had so taken hold of him that he gave up his keys early in the afternoon and sauntered out into the glittering snowy streets, with the pleasant necessity upon him of killing time as he pleased until the train started. It was the very height of the social season, sleigh-bells tinkled far and near, carriages and open sleighs with their fur-smothered occupants went swiftly to and fro. By three o'clock the countless cafés on the main thoroughfares were brilliant with lights, and as Barry strolled past their entrances the sound of laughter and voices and the blare of military music drifted out to him.

There is a certain large café in Vienna, on a certain beautiful square. Everybody knows the café and the square. A tide of society folks drifts toward them every afternoon from New Year's to Christmas, to crowd the hundreds of little indoor tables in Winter, and to scatter about under the trees and awnings in the Summer time.

Barry had never heard of this café, but his idle feet were unconsciously carrying him toward it, when capricious Adventure, relenting a little, touched his arm with the first stirring of a real romance.

Walking just ahead of him were a man and woman to whom he felt himself vaguely attracted. This faint emotion quickened into a genuine interest when the man turned to give him a decidedly keen glance; and, Barry being Barry, his blood actually leaped in his veins as he saw the woman, a moment later, follow her companion's look with a gaze that was not only searching but held a sort of appeal as well. His heart beating a shade more quickly, Barry followed them and, as he went, studied them closely.

The man was not extraordinary in any way. He wore an officer's uniform, the great capes of his coat extremely becoming his erect, square-built figure. He had a clever, dark face, turned now to his companion, to whom, as Barry could see, he was earnestly giving directions or advice.

The woman was strikingly beautiful—one of the world's lovely women. Dark, vivacious and glowing, she had an air at once eager and youthful and curiously indicative of pride and will. Her gown and hat were conspicuously handsome and she wore a quantity of magnificent furs.

Barry sighed. She was an irresistibly fascinating apparition and she had given him a special glance, to be sure, but she was very efficiently escorted, in the first place, even if, in the second, the heart of a big modern city were not a very poor place for an adventure.

Still he followed, and was presently rewarded. Two quiet-looking men in plain clothes came between him and his lovely lady and Barry distinctly heard what they said. They were speaking French, which was as his mother-tongue to him, and possibly fancied for that reason they were not likely to be overheard.

"That is she, in the great black hat and gray furs!" said one of them hurriedly.

The other answered quickly: "Certainly, certainly! I shall not mistake her. I will not lose sight of her. But don't risk for another instant her turning about and seeing us together!"

"You are right," said the first. "Remember, the other is the one to follow."

"Certainly, certainly!" said the other man again.

That was all. The speakers parted, the first turning away abruptly, the second drifting with apparent nonchalance after

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the officer and the furred lady. Barry saw him pass them, to seat himself on a bench some fifty feet beyond, where they must presently pass him in turn.

But the lady and her escort had slackened their pace and, to Barry's astonishment, as he neared them he heard the woman say, in perfect English:

"He *does* look like an American—I'm sure he is! He's clean-shaven and he doesn't look French! Karl, its our last chance—do speak to him!"

Barry was too near to assume for an instant that he did not hear. He involuntarily lifted his hat, and the officer stepped forward and gave him his hand. The lady smiled at him with an adorable air of relief and confidence and put her little glove for a second in his.

"You are an American?" said the officer gravely. "May we speak to you?"

Barry stammered a fervent assent. The two others drew quite close to him, the trio standing aside for the slow-moving current of pedestrians and lowering their voices as they talked.

"I am Colonel von Heydn," said the officer ceremoniously, and turning slightly to the woman, he added, "Madame von Heydn."

"I am Barry Williams," said Barry simply.

"Mr. Williams," said the Colonel, magnificently acknowledging the introduction and speaking in the careful but perfect English of the cultivated German, "we have taken the liberty of addressing you, because, if you will be so extremely good, you will consent to perform, for Madame von Heydn and myself, an incalculable favor."

"If you only *will!*" added Madame, with eyes that threatened laughter and threatened tears, and a mouth that curved and trembled at once. She laid an impulsive hand on his arm. Barry could see that she was shaking with nervousness.

"I shall feel much honored," he began; "if you will but let me know——?"

The officer hesitated. His eyes went uneasily to the flushed and eager woman, to Barry's keen, interested face, and wandered to the park and the crowd beyond. Madame von Heydn, watching him, caught her breath with an intensity exquisitely childish, and the little sound seemed to decide him.

"Why, it will not be so difficult," he said to Barry, with a slow smile. "I offer you my rank, Mr. Williams, as a guaranty that there is nothing for you to apprehend in the matter, and the fact that we are going to enter the most crowded and well-known café in Vienna, as a further safeguard. Will you honor me by being my guest for an hour?"

"Will I——" stammered Barry. "Do you mean that is *all*——?"

"All!" emphasized the lady, with her brilliant, eager smile. "It does not sound so hard, does it? Nor is it—nor is it! We will sit over our cakes and coffee for a while, we will enjoy the music, we will chat. And then we part. You will forget us," she finished in a lower key, "but"—and she lightly touched the furs on her breast—"but while my heart beats I shall not forget you—I will ask God every night on my knees to repay you!"

Her lips trembled again. Barry was not so much impressed by the extraordinary fervency of her tone and her changing color as by her own indifference to the feeling she showed and by the fact that her companion seemed much more impressed by her excitement than by the fact that Barry, an absolute stranger, should witness it.

"Emilia!" said the Colonel in a distressed undertone.

"I know, I know!" she answered, recovering control with an effort. "But I wished Mr. Williams to see that it is no light favor to me," she added naïvely, "so that he will be the less likely to refuse us!"

"Refuse!" ejaculated Barry, with an earnestness that made them all laugh. "I never thought of such a thing!"

"You are not afraid of being left at the table to pay for this little treat?" she smiled. "Or afraid that we are famous counterfeiters or swindlers?"

These uncomfortable suggestions were nothing to Barry, who was looking straight into the most remarkable sapphire eyes he had ever seen, but the Colonel said stiffly:

"I have called Mr. Williams's attention to the uniform I wear."

Barry smiled. He was extremely handsome when he smiled.

"I have but one objection," said he; "I am leaving town to-night, and I can not ask you and your wife to be my guests to-morrow afternoon in turn."

Madame von Heydn gave him an appreciative glance that showed him her friendship was already his, and without speaking, squared out between the two men and began pacing, in her leisurely, graceful

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way, toward the café. Barry found himself in their company as easily as if the meeting had been prearranged.

"I do not find your one objection very serious," said Madame von Heydn, smiling. "According to you, one should never eat one peach until one is sure of two?"

"One should not borrow what can not be returned," he answered laughing.

"Ah, then I am afraid we *are* imposing upon you in asking you——" she began, with an air of reluctance. "For this favor is so great that there *could* be no returning it!"

Barry laughed to find her wits again as quick as his own. He was in a state of suppressed buoyancy exhilarating in the extreme.

He had meantime quite forgotten that his new friends were being followed and he received a momentary shock when he rediscovered the spy, watching them from his bench. But the company of the Von Heydns was irresistibly stimulating. The woman's beauty and the attention she attracted and so regally disdained as they strolled along were alone enough to enchant the romantic Barry Williams. The officer made a distinguished second.

Chatting easily, they strolled across the park and up the broad flight of shallow marble steps that gives entrance to the café. Already Barry had noticed that his companions were widely known, for there had been much bowing and nodding from motor-cars and sleighs; now he saw that their entrance into the brilliantly lighted room was causing an actual sensation. The Colonel seemed ill at ease. Madame von Heydn's cheeks blazed, but she smiled and bowed here and there nonchalantly enough as she loosened her furs and fussed with the clasp of her glove.

A beaming majordomo came forward, and Barry, who had no German, heard the Colonel consult with him for a few moments in that tongue. The table at which whey were presently seated was in the very center of the room.

That Madame von Heydn should choose this most conspicuous spot—and the choice was undoubtedly hers—was surprising to Barry, who was glad, for his part, to sink into his seat and attempt to collect his scattered thoughts.

The big room was already well filled. Above the gallant efforts of the band there rose a gay confusion of voices and laughter. Handsome women in handsome gowns, jewels, flowers and furs, uniformed men, hurrying waiters with trays—all contributed color and motion to the brilliant whole.

As Barry became more composed and could look frankly about him, he could not but notice that the Von Heydns and himself were attracting an astonishing amount of attention. Dowagers whispered about them behind fans, young people went through the familiar artifice of noticing everything else in their neighborhood before bringing their keen glances to the exact table where the Von Heydns sat. Greetings were nodded from all sides; the formal "Madame von Heydn" being used even less than Madame's own name of Emilia. Colonel von Heydn was constantly rising to acknowledge a formal salute from this table or that. He was noticeably ill at ease and spoke jerkily and unnaturally, but Madame chattered like a happy child and her color became every instant more and more brilliant.

The Von Heydns frequently broke into German for a few intense sentences. When they did so, one or the other would immediately apologize to Barry and translate for his benefit, but he rather suspected that the interpretation was not word for word.

He did not care. Of all men in the world he was the one most to enjoy this atmosphere of mystery and intrigue. That the air about him was electric with some suppressed excitement he was quite aware. That events were shaping themselves of which he had not the slightest cognizance was easily apparent. But Barry bore his share in the conversation easily and well, and, if he had time to define it, would have realized that his only fear in the whole matter was that this enchanting problem might suddenly solve itself simply and obviously and rob him of his long-sought adventure.

However, as the moments went by, the sense of something amiss, something closely impending, deepened rather than lessened.

Presently Madame von Heydn spoke sharply to the Colonel in German, and the two turned to bow, ceremoniously and unsmilingly, to a group of seven or eight persons who were seating themselves at a table some thirty feet away. One of them, a certain rather heavy-faced young man, was watching them with an almost ferocious intensity. Barry, with a glance about him,

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discovered that the close attention of the entire café was openly centered upon this group. For the first time a little thrill of apprehension shook him. In all this brilliance and light, with the smiling women and gallant men all about, and a park with its police and its crowds within actual hail, he felt the sinister touch of an actual fear in his heart.

"The café is full of your friends," he said.

Madame von Heydn smiled. "Those are kinspeople," she responded. "Which is not always quite the same thing."

She was a little pale, and her voice was a trifle strained as she presently said to the Colonel: "You wanted to telephone, Karl?"

Barry was quite sure that the other man had not meditated any such thing until this instant. But, after eyeing her intensely a second, the Colonel said:

"Yes. Shall I say here—until six?"

"In English," she suggested calmly.

The Colonel departed, every eye in the café following the direct figure. He was gone for some moments. Madame, who had at first chatted cheerfully and easily, began to send uneasy glances toward the door where he had disappeared. Her manner became very restless and Barry could see that she did not know what she was saying.

"I can't think what keeps Karl!" said she at last.

"I'll go see," said Barry, crumpling his napkin beside his plate and pushing back his chair. But before he could rise she stayed him.

"For God's sake, don't move! Don't you see them watching us?" she said, very white. Then in a more normal tone she added: "You will think I am mad. But I think—I think it is wiser for you to wait with me. Karl will come."

Barry's eyes involuntarily went to the group she had designated as kinspeople. The young man that he had noticed before had also pushed back his chair and was evidently being kept in his seat only by the arguments of a pale, cold-eyed woman some years his senior, who had her hand upon his arm.

A moment later the Colonel rejoined them and the Von Heydns had a short but evidently pregnant conversation in German. While he talked, the Colonel looked frankly at Barry, as if he were including him in his confidences, whatever they were, and Barry fancied that for the moment his host had forgotten that he could not understand German.

They discussed coffee, served in shining china pots, and hot rolls and sweet butter, and a salad so elaborately decorated with flowers and vegetables that it was a genuine work of art. Then came ices and delicious sticky little German cakes, and finally liqueurs, all served so leisurely that the contented Barry saw the hands of the clock creeping past five and on to six without any other feeling than that these delightful hours would be all too short, however long they lasted. Cold twilight out of doors deepened into absolute darkness, and lights began to flash in the park.

Just before six Madame rose and gathered her furs regally about her. Superbly indifferent to following eyes, she went to the door, Barry escorting her. The Colonel stopped to speak for a moment with the hostile young man of the neighboring group.

"How are we to thank you?" said Madame, when they were in the doorway and sufficiently alone not to be overheard. "I can not tell! But believe me, you have done us an inestimable favor." She laid her hand upon his arm, and the blue eyes that she raised to his were eloquent with feeling. "I shall not see you again," she said, "but I shall not forget you!"

Barry tried to say what a privilege he felt it to have served her in any way. He wished—he hoped—he couldn't help begging that——

"No, no!" she said, unsmilingly and shaking her head. "I know what you are going to say. But this must be the end. Karl," she added to the Colonel, who rejoined them, "will you call a motor? And what are your plans?"

"Why," said the Colonel, to whom Barry had taken a genuine liking, "if Mr. Williams is still free, I am hoping he can spare me another hour or two?"

"Delighted!" said Barry eagerly. "I am at loose ends until eleven, you know!" He could not bear to let his adventure quite disappear. The Colonel was not the lady, but he was near the rose.

"We might have a bite at the club," said the Colonel, "and see an act or two of 'Traviata'?"

"Capital!" said she. And then to the Colonel, "You spoke to——?"

"I told him exactly how I proposed to spend my evening," said he quickly.

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"Ah!" said she. Then, "And my motor, Karl?"

The Colonel duly signalled a passing car and with another hurried farewell to Barry Madame went quickly down the steps and jumped into it. Barry heard the Colonel give a residence address. A little murmur behind him made him turn to face the people from the near table who had watched them and been watched so closely. Barry eyed them with a curiosity no less open than their own. Then the Colonel rejoined him and they walked briskly across the park to the officer's club.

And that was the end of the adventure. Or, if not quite the end, what followed had no significance to Barry. He and Colonel von Heydn dined informally at the club, talking as men who have class in common will, and finding much to say. But no word of Madame fell from the officer's lips, to Barry's keen disappointment. They duly attended the second act of the opera, and parted the best of friends at the station just before Barry's train pulled out that night. Only once in the evening did his wonderment return in full force to Barry, and that was when his foot was actually upon the step of the sleeping-car, when his eye met that of the spy whom he had first seen hours ago in the park. The man was sitting on a station bench, stolid and expressionless.

II

BARRY sailed for home, reached New York without incident, and after much speculation resolved to resign himself to the possession of an unsolved mystery. The more he pondered, the more puzzled he became over the whole affair; and inasmuch as the friends to whom he told the story either good-naturedly disbelieved it or, believing, were as much at a loss as he was, there seemed no way of clearing the matter up.

There was no tangible clue to grasp. Who were the Von Heydns? What was their story? What conceivable service could the presence of an unknown American do a well-known German officer and his wife, in a crowded café? Why was the Colonel followed? If anything was flagrantly irregular, why the gracious bows and smiles from all sides? And if everything was as it should have been, why the spy—why the abrupt request made to an utter stranger in the park, why Madame's emotion and the Colonel's uneasiness? It was not a joke, obviously. And if a tragedy, why "Traviata" and a cheery farewell at the train?

Mere thinking could not possibly bring the solution, and Barry thought about it less and less as time went by. But five years later he was destined to hear more of his German friends in a curiously unexpected manner.

It happened that business brought him to New York that Summer and that upon a certain afternoon, at about half-past six, he took his seat at one of the window tables of a Forty-second Street hotel. He was dividing his attention between the passing crowds of the street and the different early diners about him when he heard his own name delightedly shouted near by and jumped to his feet to greet an old college chum, Franklin Selfridge. The two men had not met for some years, but each retained an affectionate memory of the other, and they fell into a long talk.

With the eagerness of two boys they discussed their business prospects, their marriages and their children. Mr. Selfridge was waiting now for his wife to join him.

"I want you to meet her, Barry," said he. "She's feeling a little bit done up now, from the hot weather, but she'll be all right. Never gets used to New York's climate."

"She's not a New Yorker then, Frank?"

"Oh, my, no! Mrs. Selfridge was a German girl," said her husband, "woman, rather, for she was a widow when we were married. She married a young fellow, a sort of third cousin, when she was only twenty, and he died a few months later."

"H'm!" said Barry, without any particular emotion.

"And she was mighty near a second marriage," continued Mr. Selfridge, with a reminiscent smile, "when I turned up! We'd met, years before, in Washington, when she was a mere kid, but the minute we met again —by an accident, too—we both knew the way the wind blew. I knew that it was Em or nobody, and she decided, just as fast, that she was willing to give up everything for me. But it was an awfully close shave!"

"H'm!" said Barry, with his pleasant, absent smile.

"Fact was," said Mr. Selfridge, who enjoyed the narrative, "her family had fixed up another marriage for her, with a fellow she actually loathed, a baron."

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"It sounds like a regular novel!" said Barry, smiling indulgently.

"Novel!" repeated Mr. Selfridge in a satisfied tone. "It beats most novels!"

"But what was the objection to you, old man?" Barry asked. "You've got pretty much everything on earth to offer a girl."

"Oh, her father and brother both owed money to this other fellow," explained Mr. Selfridge with relish, "and, to tell the truth, they had squeezed a sort of tentative promise out of Em, by sheer bullying, some months before I turned up. By that time preparations for her marriage were under way, and they were doing every darn thing you can think of to keep her to it. You know what women can do! It was announced before the poor girl had the faintest intention of admitting it, and there were betrothal services, ceremonies, presents, and all the rest of it. When she went to her father and told him she'd met me again and how things were, the old boy simply blazed. Then the Baron threatened to challenge me, on the strength of their engagement. Then her stepmother suddenly pretended to come over to her side of the matter, and she told Em simply to await developments, and she would see that at the last minute the wedding didn't take place! Em trusted her, of course. Well, the very day before the wedding—but does this interest you?"

Barry did not answer. His eyes were fixed with startled intensity upon a woman who was threading her way toward them among the little tables and the watching tea-drinkers. She wore a thin Summer gown now, instead of gray furs, and was many miles from the city where Barry first had seen her, but there was no mistaking Madame von Heydn—as beautiful and as imperative as ever.

To his surprise she came straight to their table.

"Here's Mrs. Selfridge now!" said his companion, and they both rose. A moment later Barry was presented, and felt again the little hand in his.

He could only stare at her in utter confusion, but the lady, following her first indifferent glance with a suddenly keen one, gave a gasp of surprise and pleasure, and caught both his hands in hers.

"Franklin!" she cried, her face radiant. "This is too wonderful! Mr. Williams is *my American!*"

"Is—*what?* Barry Williams? Oh, come!" shouted Mr. Selfridge. And after a second's bewildered staring, he grasped the hands she had just freed and gave Barry a pressure he did not soon forget.

"But every one is staring—every one is staring!" interposed the lady suddenly, and they all sat down, breathless and laughing, and began their explanations.

"But you are—you were——?" Barry began clumsily.

"I was Madame von Heydn," she finished promptly with an encouraging smile.

"I told you she was a widow," Selfridge reminded him.

"And—Colonel von Heydn?" hinted Barry.

"My first husband's cousin," supplied the lady, "and one of the dearest and truest of men. But tell me," she added seriously, "*what* have you thought of us, all these years? What *did* you think the explanation was?"

"Upon my word, I had to give it up," said Barry.

"Of course you did! Of course you did," she said thoughtfully, "and yet it will seem very simple to you when I explain. Neither my brother nor my stepfather knew Franklin by sight, you see, and both were extremely anxious to have him identified. You simply took Franklin's place. Nobody who saw us that afternoon dreamed but that you were my much-discussed American lover!"

"And while the eyes of Em's amiable family were fixed upon you, I was tearing around Vienna making arrangements for a quick get-away that very night," said Selfridge. "It all worked like a charm!"

"The *worst* that could have happened to you would have been being locked up in the city prison for the night, Mr. Williams," said Mrs. Selfridge earnestly, "and, as you know, Karl's taking you completely under his wing prevented even that. They all felt that you were quite safe with Karl, and he saw to it that you were kept very much in the public eye until your train actually departed."

"Your people were watching *me*, eh?" said Barry, beginning to see daylight.

"Watching! I should think they were! But I'll explain a little more fully. You see, Franklin and I were almost desperate, with letters blocked and even opened, and every one watching, and my stepmother, who was working against us all the time,

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asking me to go ahead and trust her blindly to prevent my wedding the next day. I had managed to get a note to Franklin telling him to meet me in the park that afternoon at any risk, but, about an hour before I was to start, my little maid came to me with the news that my father and brother had discovered our plan and were resolved to follow me. When I spoke to an American, they were to follow him, and, the minute he was alone, they proposed by some piece of outrageous injustice to arrest him on some charge or another and hold him over night if possible, and until after the wedding had actually taken place if they could."

"But how the deuce could they manage——" Barry began.

"Simply enough—trust them!" she interrupted. "Suppose one of the park globes had broken over your head, and two or three bystanders had witnessed that you broke it? Or suppose an apple-stand had been upset, and the keeper, who would have had his hint from the Baron's men, had sworn that you spoke to him violently and struck it? Suppose a brawl had broken out within an inch of you and one of the combatants claimed that you used your own stick? Of course, had these plans succeeded in catching Franklin, there would have been complete exoneration and apology the next day, but the next day was too late!

"Well, you may imagine the state of mind I was in, Mr. Williams. I dispatched my maid to warn Franklin and to tell him to stay in his hotel until he heard from me, and I went to walk in the park myself just to keep them all on the wrong scent. And just then Karl happened to join me, going for his afternoon coffee, and I told him all about it. And while we were wondering and wondering what could be done, Karl saw you sauntering ahead, and said 'I suppose that's not your American?' and in a flash I realized that you could save us. A spy was watching us, even then, and I could have screamed for joy when you accepted the situation so quietly and walked along with us without a second's hesitation. You *must* have seen how we were watched? Wasn't it fearful—and funny, too? And then didn't you see my people at that near table? And don't you remember that Karl got up and went out to telephone?"

"I see—I see!" said Barry slowly. "He telephoned to——"

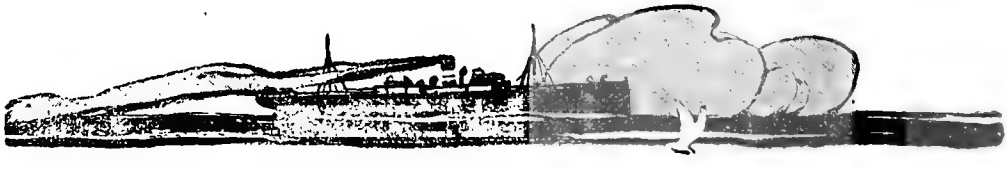
"To me," said Selfridge. "And to his own garage, to say that a strange man was to have one of his motors, and an old uniform."

"By *George!*" said Barry.

"And then, as we left," finished Madame radiantly, "Karl stayed behind long enough to say that he would keep you for dinner at the club and take you to the opera and actually see you to your train, and he thought you could be disposed of without any violence! What else could they think but that, having you under their actual eyes, you were not plotting any mischief with me elsewhere? Meantime, I stepped into the motor—to all appearances it was Karl's motor, with one of Karl's men in uniform on the seat—and Karl called my own house address and off we went!"

"Yes, but then where did you meet Franklin?" said Barry, still a little confused.

"Meet me?" grinned Mr. Selfridge. "Who did you think was driving the motor-car?"



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Where Hell is Frozen Over

Being the log of the launch "*America*" of the Fiala Arctic Expedition of 1904-5, in thirty paragraphs, amplified and regretfully expurgated

by William Bevier Ashley

FOREWORD: Leaders of expeditions beyond doubt are great men. Great! And yet, there are others in the expeditions—those who just go along and do things against which every ounce of flesh and blood rebels.

Stories about these lesser great men of the Arctic are bound to appear, now that the Main Event has had its Final Telling—true stories of raw, stinging incidents that properly have no extended place in the Big Story, but which cut some ice in the undertaking nevertheless; like the hand to hand struggles which constitute battles but not history.

H. P. Hartt, chief engineer on the Fiala Expedition, is the hero of this one.

Ever see two sections of a freight train come together on the ribs of a brakeman waiting to couple up? That is the way the ice floes closed in on the ribs of the *America*. 40° below. *Pitch* dark day and night. Sullenly as they crushed together, they might separate again, dropping the ruin as the coupler fell to the ties. So the expedition disembarked with all they could carry.

Hartt pried up brass plates and things; unbolted boilers and things; broke off pipes and things, and tossed them out on the ice. Tools, dynamo, small engine—everything of metal that could be torn loose was sledded over hummocky ice to land, against a fifty-mile wind. The rest of the party saved such stuff as food, coal, bedding and scientific instruments. And a camp was erected by the light of wicks. This happened in November, before the President's Thanksgiving Proclamation reached them.

They had saved the ship's yawl, an open thirty-foot boat.

In April next, Fiala and all but four of his party left the camp with dog-teams for Cape Flora in order to send despatches and several men home and to secure certain supplies, planning to return toward Fall and prepare for a Pole dash in the Spring. After Fiala went, Hartt decided to have some diversion while waiting for the "day" to dawn, so he converted the yawl into a duck of a motor-boat.

Cutting down the fittings from the engine-room of a four-hundred-ton ship to fit its tender is like tucking a cast-off locomotive under the hood of a runabout. But

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luckily this has nothing to do with that. Only, when they got her done, they would have knocked her to splinters had they known what was in store for her.

Franz Josef Archipelago is a lot of odds and ends—mostly the latter—left over in making the world's islands, and they lit in the Arctic Circle between the 40th and 60th meridians west. On a map you can start a bob-sled at Rudolph Land, the northeastern limit, and slide down the western shore of a dozen islands, landing snug and trim on Cape Flora, Northbrook Island. But *off* the map, to coast down this stretch of rock-bound, berg-guarded thank-you-ma'ams is another thing. These islands and channels form a nautical puzzle in which you must get somewhere without crossing your own wake twice. It can be done, as Hartt proved.

Fiala, when Hartt launched the motor yawl *America*, was at Cape Flora, say a hundred miles away from Camp Abruzzi by crow and a thousand by gosh. The frozen fragment at Abruzzi had dug into a pile of coal, greatly needed, and other trinkets left by a former expedition, and Hartt, like a boy who has found a muskrat hole, couldn't delay to tell his chums down there at Flora. Moreover, he had a proud notion that he could coast the launch down that slanting shore-line and surprise and fetch Fiala back rejoicing and slapping him, Hartt, on the back all the way. Alas!

That's the spirit of men night-bound in the Arctic. All barriers of birth and station and creed crumble as quickly as they do in hell. The Arctic is merely where hell is frozen over.

THE LOG OF THE MOTOR-LAUNCH "AMERICA"

(*As expurgated, etc.*)

Tuesday, July 19, 1904—Weather clear and mild: temperature 8° below. Ice all out of Teplitz Bay. Left Camp Abruzzi in launch *America* bound for Cape Flora at 10.15 P. M. Expect to make it in seven days. Crew consists of E. Perry, seaman; H. P. Hartt, engineer; Timberman, a little pup. Everything working well except the pump, which is giving a lot of trouble. (Like starting on a picnic feeling perfectly fit but for one jumping tooth.)

Wednesday, July 20—Weather same. Everything going to the queen's taste. Told Perry at this rate we'd reach Cape Flora in about five days. Perry thankfully agreed. "Only," he said, "that ballast-tank's worrying me. I think she's leaking." Which was correct, so we headed for land five miles off and tied up to a floe southward of Cape Ann. Filled tank and turned in. No hurry. This is going to be a bully little lark.

Thursday, July 21—Got up steam at five A. M. Everything in fine condition except the condenser, which is frozen. Have to work the launch under high pressure and stop every two hours to refill ballast-tank. Pump still sulky. Made a good day's run, averaging eight knots. Weather clear and calm. Tied up at 12.30 P. M.

Friday, July 22—Under way at five A. M. Reproved Perry for oversleeping, but he didn't say anything necessary to record. No change in the weather excepting a fresh head-wind that made us tie up twice till she moderated. Also foggy. Everything still in good shape. Coal is very poor in spots and getting low; this running under high pressure with ice-cold water is expensive. Crept along edge of the floe all day. Ought to make Cape Flora in about four days anyway.

Saturday, July 23—Everything coming our way, including the ice, which started to come in about eight P. M. last night. —— it! Perry killed a fine big seal, which sank before we could get to it! Only two bags of coal left, but they're the best of the lot. This ballast-tank would make a good sifter for a stone-crusher. May make Flora in four or five days, sure. Perry said "—— to ——!" Timberman eating strong.

Sunday, July 24—Got under way seven A. M. Took an hour to get up steam. Weather hazy and cold. Perry just killed another fine large seal, which is lucky, for we need it. Steering for it. Have finished one of the bags of coal, but it ran us twenty hours. . . . . The seal sank before we could get it. Being Sunday, knocked off seven P. M. and tied up off Cape Norway. Everything looks favorable.

Monday, July 25—Decided to save the coal till later on, so got under way with oars and sail. Told Perry he rowed a nice hand,

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but no thanks. Headed for Mary Elizabeth Island and started to work around by way of Cape Brice. Hard blow came up from S. E. bringing drift-ice that all but smashed us. This is our first mishap. Got clear only by hard work bossed by Timberman. When things eased up, Perry piped out, "Do you think we'd better turn back?" You'd thought we were after the Pole itself.

"It's this way, Perry," I explained when I got over my surprise; "we've come this far and gone into our coal like a new couple with nine tons in the cellar November first. Now, it's January, we'll say, and the bin looking like Mother Hubbard's cupboard. Will the couple go back to November first, Perry, and begin again? Or will it tear down the landlord's partitions and burn wood?"

All this time Perry was rigging up the spare oar for a mast, for the wind had smashed our stick, so he was too busy to converse.

"No, Perry," I continued, "we won't turn back just for a stinking seal or two and an empty coal-bag. The weather is settling, and in two days we'll run her nose ashore on Cape Flora."

Soon after, gale began coming in from N. E. and we had to let her run before it. With the wind on our beam and a heavy following sea boarding us continually, we expected every minute to be swamped. Made the lee of a berg off the island and tied up to it, exhausted. Launch over half full and the pump useless. Perry and myself wet to the bone. Timberman discouraged. We made coffee and got into our soaking blankets to keep warm. Gale steadily increasing. Temperature dropping fast. May improve by morning. Perry said, "Two days to Cape Flora like ——!" and fell asleep.

Tuesday, July 26—[Expurgated up to last sentence.] Don't look like Cape Flora before July 29th now.

Wednesday, July 27—Waited till two P. M., then put out and immediately got caught in drift. Fought ice for six hours and got back to the berg off Cape Fisher with one propeller blade cracked. Didn't talk. Once across Brown's Fiord, things will be different.

Thursday, July 28—Bucked drift with sail and oars from four A. M. to five P. M., then big lead opened up. Started at once to cross Brown's Fiord. Half-way and going fine when a heavy sea and head-current struck us like a fire-engine running down a baby-carriage. Perry and Timberman wanted to put about and run for the berg. Made him get up steam and with help of sails and oars we got across. This white ash business is simply ——. But Cape Flora now by August 1, sure! ["White ash" means rowing. Brown's Channel is about equal to any ten-mile stretch of the Hudson. Imagine taking all day to cross the Hudson under steam, sail *and* oars! And in July!]

Friday, July 29—Make it August 2. Had a good day. Got quite a ways into Markham Sound, then crossed under the feet of several fire-engines. They bent only two propeller blades and took off one. Made a small island on south side of Sound and tied up to it. Went ashore for driftwood and exercise. Perry cheering up. Timberman explored the island three times without stopping. [Markham Sound might correspond in size to the Hudson opposite Manhattan. In other respects the two waters are unlike.]

Saturday, July 30—As the launch isn't an ice-yacht, we made little headway to-day. No matter. Cape Flora is only thirty miles off now. Say by August first again. Even Perry agrees. Plenty of food till then, if we don't use much of it. Came near getting in a hole, but, by working like a switch-engine for seven hours, we escaped just as the ice shut in with a deafening crash. Tied up north side of Young's Sound.

Sunday, July 31—Perry complained that we don't observe the Sabbath enough, so didn't get under way, after having breakfast, until six A. M. Now crossing Young's Sound to Cape Harmsworth. Can easily make Cape Flora from there to-morrow. Now that we are about to arrive, Perry talks of nothing but Fiala's surprise and pleasure. Both of us inclined to relax and not try to reach camp before about five P. M., Monday. . . . Ice pinched us in a lead, and nearly did us an injury. Carried away the shoe and false keel and broke off another propeller blade and wrenched the remaining good one. We had to fight for our lives, but managed to get alongside a large old berg. To escape

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the ice, had to board it, unload everything, and camp with no shelter. Blowing hard from the S. E. with cold rain. Drift may flatten the launch any minute. Timberman dissatisfied with surroundings. We finally got into our wet blankets with nothing to eat or drink. Can't make Cape Flora to-morrow—not by five P. M. anyway.

Monday, August 1—Helpless on berg only about two miles from shore, carried by tide and wind. Weather very bad. Drift as far as the eye can see. How we are going to make the land, God only knows. Our little launch stood the pressure during the night, but we could hear the timbers cracking. If this kind of business keeps up it will knock both of us out. Hooker Island in sight. Nice to look at. Wet blankets are bad on the temper, but told Perry not to kick Timberman again.

Tuesday, August 2—[Entirely expurgated.]

Wednesday, August 3—No change; weather terrible, snow and rain with fearful gale. As our blankets are soaked and we have to lie in water, thought we might as well take the chance and try to get a little rest in the launch. Had no sleep since we got on this berg. No more than got settled when the pressure started and the launch was on her beam-ends before we got out. If this weather continues much longer, neither Perry nor myself will have strength enough left to make land with the *kyak*, if ice does open up. Timberman thinks I'm a kennel.

Thursday, August 4—Weather still bad; very cold. Toward noon ice began to open up and we at once started to reload our little steamer, as another night would settle us. Talking the situation over while we worked, concluded to return to Markham Sound, make for Camp Zeigler, rest a bit and then start again for Cape Flora, reaching there probably in one or two days. Timberman agreeable to anything. By stiff work and taking big chances we got clear and into Markham Sound by eight P. M. Big relief to reach open water again. Could have made Zeigler easily, only heavy snowstorm came up, so tied up to glacier. Almost afraid to sleep in our wet blankets, as we might freeze. Nothing but a little drift-ice in the Sound, and that works with the tide, so to-morrow can make camp and rest. Need it after our experience on the berg.

Friday, August 5—Could hardly get out of our blankets this morning on account of snow that nearly filled launch and completely buried Perry and me. Timberman somehow stayed on top. Finally got boat emptied and under way without having anything to eat. Started to work up Sound toward Camp Zeigler. Everything clear ahead, and Perry almost talkative, though we're both about all in. Think we can't fail to be at Cape Flora some time on August 7.

Some things have been against us on this trip. Every time we get about half-way across any bay or channel, head-wind and sea always hit us. Have now tried to make a small island just ahead twice, but both times have been turned back by head-winds. In making a third attempt in dead calm, stopped to make some coffee, and a thick fog set in. Rushed to get under way, but found our compass out of order, so didn't dare start. Happened to sight top of a small island, and steered for it and made it. It is Bruce Island, a few miles from Zeigler. Gave our dear little compass passage, as we have no further use for it. About played out. Timberman scarcely moves. To-night we talked matters over thoroughly, and concluded to give up and return to Rudolph Island. Launch being disabled, instead of being a help to Fiala we'd be a hindrance.

Saturday, August 6—Foggy and very cold. At nine A. M. left moorings, bound for Crown Prince Rudolph Island. Sorry to turn back, but glad our hardships are over. Should reach camp by August 9. Had an experience, anyway.

Sunday, August 7—Worked north, still making good time, until we tried to cross Brown's Fiord, when gale started up and large field of ice closed in and began to crush launch till it nearly flattened her. Put our few provisions hurriedly in *kyak*, ready to make a jump. Finally pressure let up and we were carried westward by the drift. Bear and cub passed. Perry shot at them, but only started them on the run northward. Timberman got excited and went overboard under the ice. Perry climbed over the side and somehow got the cur again. Both nearly drowned. The weather is getting terrible—raining, snow-

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ing, blowing. Very cold. Perry says he always hated to drift. Told him we ought to get into our blankets so as not to freeze to death. We didn't intend even to doze, as the danger was so great, but, being completely exhausted, fell right asleep.

Monday, August 8—Always will be glad we brought the pup. He woke me just in time to see a big she-bear first, close at hand. Called Perry, but couldn't rouse him. Luckily the rifle happened to hit him a crack on the head as I was trying to throw in a cartridge with half-frozen hands. Dropped her, but she got into the water and swam for another cake. Handed rifle to Perry and told him to kill her, which he did. Perry is an obedient cuss. Ice started to open suddenly and we had to work frantically to get through to open water before it closed in again. Rudder unshipped in the tussle. Didn't even get a terribly needed steak from the bear. Timberman disgusted. We are trying for Cape Sybil.

Tuesday, August 9—Got to Cape Sybil late last night after fighting the drift all day. Turned in as soon as we tied up, and before we could shut our eyes a berg calfed near by, almost upsetting us. After we got to sleep another heavy swell threw us on the rocks, and it was as much as we could do to get clear. The launch was fearfully battered. Waited till things got settled, then turned in once more. When we woke were high and dry on the rocky shore. Clear weather, anyway. Unloaded the launch and got her afloat and reloaded, when black fog set in. Perry remarked that the fellows up at Camp Abruzzi would feel blue when they learned what a nice sail they missed. Said he couldn't help feeling in a hurry to get back to camp to tell them. Asked me if the fog diminished my appetite. Suggested that some men ought never to lead an expedition. Mentioned our families back home. Timberman does nothing but run the length of the launch, whining. Decided to get under way and follow glacier. Pulled twenty hours and tied up on south side of Cape Fisher. Beginning to be the least bit timid about these fiords and sounds: they seem to be inhabited by trouble.

Wednesday, August 10—Weather much better. During night a glacier or berg calfed, sending in heavy sea which tossed us up on the beach. Started to unload, but too tired. "The out-tide will help us do it in the morning," said Perry. Glad Perry's getting more hopeful. He looks ghastly.

Thursday, August 11—Slept too late; tide out and launch still high and dry. Put in an hour's sweating work trying to float her, but she sat as tight as a reclining cow. In the afternoon managed to float her and make a start. "Let us keep going now, night and day," pleaded Perry, "until we get to camp." I agreed, but strong N. E. wind set in and we had to put her back and tie up. Passed first good night in years, though, shifting moorings only twice.

Friday, August 12—Wind still at the double-quick, with heavy sea. Bucked into it just for luck, but it was bad luck. Getting desperate, worked gingerly along land to Cape Norway. Fagged out. Perry says we'll find ourselves back on Sybil in the morning, and he doesn't care a —— if we do. Tut, tut. Provisions holding out well on quarter rations. No bread for ten days.

Saturday, August 13—Wind and ice in our favor, so gaily made a start for Cape Hugh Mills. Have a feeling everything O. K. now. Perry getting quite cheerful. Rounding the Cape we struck a floe and tied to it to rest. Just as we started to make coffee a strip of ice came down on us.

We hung on, and then half a mile to southward saw berg drifting down. All at once it headed straight at us. It struck us right abeam, smashing launch badly and carrying everything before it. Launch began to sink, but we managed to get on the berg with all the stuff, including the *kyak*.

After getting things piled, we bailed the launch, hoping to save our little steamer on which our lives depend. Perry has quit talking, which is a bad sign. Found water coming in abaft of boiler and discovered bottom planks broken and shoved inboard. Tried to put on canvas patch, but could do nothing with it, boiler being in the way and our hands stiff with cold, so got into our wet blankets to keep from freezing. While shivering there, I thought that by throwing boiler overboard we might be able to get at hole. Perry agreed violently, and we went at it and got holding-down bolts broken off. Then shoved the whole business over the port side. Got water out and put on canvas

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patch with a piece of wood over it. Perry suddenly began to rave. He had discovered that she was stove in just abaft of engine. But we got a patch on that, too, and think we have a bare chance of saving our launch. I mean our lives.

It is fearfully cold—blowing and raining. We are lying in water on the berg. All I am thinking about is whether we will ever set foot on land again. Perry says we won't. This is a wicked-looking berg, slick as glass, and if she starts up again and gets the same headway that she had when she struck us, it will be good-by all.

To-morrow will be Sunday. I'm thinking about the folks at home. Would like the kid to kiss me good-night. Almost feel discouraged. Timberman is licking my half-frozen face. God help us!

Sunday, August 14—Weather fine, ice slacking up. Launch made but little water during the night, so we painfully loaded her and shoved off, and finally, by taking hair-raising chances, got to floe off Cape Hugh Mills and tied up to it. As ice is in, we can not proceed north. After getting launch in good harbor, took our blankets on shore to dry, then got some supper. Perry suggested that we turn back for Cape Flora. Says he wants some real Arctic experience. Told him to go to——for it, but he was asleep. Timberman just back from exploring the island.

Monday, August 15—Weather clear, calm and warm. Wonder where our dear old berg is. Camped on island. Our beds last night consisted of stationary rocks, so we put in the best night's rest we have had for many moons. The three of us took trip to top of island and then all over it. No signs of any old camp or bear-tracks. Feeling stiff from so much inaction, we broke camp at 10P. M. and tried to make passage through drift-ice. No use, so put back in harbor to be safe. Our only danger now is from ice smashing our disabled launch, so can't take any chances. While we were cooking a bite (I would shudder to hear Perry prepare a course dinner), an old she-walrus came nosing around and before I could kill her she near thumped the bottom out of the launch. Turned in early. We may last a day or two more, if nothing new happens. The walrus went away to die; Timberman hasn't spoken since.

Tuesday, August 16—Camp Abruzzi in sight from top of hill! Wanted to press ahead, but too weak after bucking everything all day but food. Had to keep shifting moorings during the night, and Perry said it seemed like old times. The steady hammering of the ice won't let the steamer heal up, and she makes a good deal of water. Wonder after all if we'll——

Wednesday, August 17—Day opened with light N. E. wind, clear and cold. Headed for Cape Auk, ten A. M. and tied up to ice on south side of Cape about five P. M. Too easy; something is surely due. Perry and I trailed Timberman to Baldwin's old caché and found it all scattered. A stream of water is running through it. Left Auk 10.30 P. M., working through drift-ice but making good time and keen for trouble. As the day closes are quite near camp. Ice seems to have left Teplitz Bay while we have been south, and there are only a few bergs left. Perry said, "How good to see a berg again!" Perry sighted two walrus coming toward us. I said, "I wish it was a couple of *kyaks* from camp; *I'm busted.*" Two *kyaks* it was!

Thursday, August 18—At 12:30 midnight, the *kyaks* reached us, Carpenter and Stewart aboard, and took us in tow. Timberman feebly leaped for one, but fell in the water. "Now, then, Perry!" I shouted, but Perry turned red and got the pup out this time with an oar. Arrived Camp Abruzzi, Crown Prince Rudolph's Land, at 12.45 A. M., sound but tired. Men unloaded launch and hauled her on beach, while Perry and I followed Timberman to camp. Sorry Fiala not with us now. So ends voyage of steam launch *America*.

THE following account of the trip of the launch *America* appears in the narrative of the Fiala Expedition, "Fighting the Polar Ice," page 154:

Mr. Hartt recited his experience while trying to reach Cape Flora, where he hoped to be of assistance to me. On July 19, accompanied by Seaman Perry, he set out in a steam launch he had constructed. While in the British Channel he almost lost the boat and had to throw the boiler overboard to save the launch. This accident necessitated their return, and on August 18 they reached the place from which they had started a month before.

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The Fear

by Charles Alden Seltzer

LYING flat on his back in a thicket of mesquite, his head pillowed on his saddle, Mexico Lenehan gazed drowsily at a ragged line of timber-dotted hills that rose somberly into the swimming sunlight. They were sentinels that marked the course of the Gila River, twenty miles away. Mexico had gazed long at them; for an hour he had lain in the mesquite thicket, thinking as only a man can think who has been out in the world and found it an enemy. He perceived a certain dim analogy between the frowning, solemn hills and his own life—he felt as the hills looked.

In the first place there was fate. Queer thing, was fate, viewed through Mexico's eyes. Apparently it had conspired against him from the beginning. It had given him a name that suggested his mixed blood. It had brought him into the world through the instrumentality of an itinerant outlaw, who had succeeded in making a reputation that extended throughout the Territory; it had nurtured him at the breast of a Mexican woman who, within a year after his birth, had succeeded in drinking herself to death. Thus had hope for Mexico died early in life; thus was he predisposed to crime.

Yet for the full twenty-six years of his life had he succeeded in mocking fate; had succeeded in walking the straight and narrow path.

Only once had he been in danger of straying from it, and that was when during the course of an uproarious evening in the Top Notch Saloon, in Silver City, a foolish cowpuncher had taunted him concerning his

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birth. They carried the foolish puncher out on a shutter, and a doctor worked all night over him, extracting the bullet—for Mexico has used his gun when the puncher had forgotten all about the conversation. For a time things looked bad for Mexico, but the puncher recovered—and Mexico got back into the straight and narrow path again.

Mexico was thinking of this incident now—along with many other things. Always had the world treated him shabbily. But he had taken the treatment grimly, suffering the humiliation of low birth, resisting the drag of evil desires, holding a stern check upon himself because—because of the Fear.

Often, without success, had he attempted to analyze the sensation, this thing that held him back from his inclinations. Latterly he had come to believe it inherent—a thing belonging to his progenitors; a curse of the flesh that made his body a great, hulking anchor upon his mind. He knew this curse could not have come from his father; the outlaw Lenehan had been feared and respected because of a certain reckless daring and courage that had always marked his operations in the territory.

That he had come by it through his mother he doubted not. He knew the Mexican character. He knew the slinking, stealthy, sneaking chill that told of his own cowardice; he felt the mark of it on his face whenever danger confronted him; he felt it in his heart, he felt it in the cold tingles that reached from his brain to his heels—gripping him and paralyzing his muscles and clouding his thoughts. It was a thing that made him weak and vacillating; made him cringe when facing a brave man; made him yearn to strike in the dark.

Something of this passion gripped him now as he lay in the mesquite thicket gazing at the somber hills of the Gila. Something of the hate and the murder-lust of his progenitors moved his lips from his teeth and caused him to sneer at the shadows of the hills. Yet he did not yield to it, for he knew it was the Mexican blood. If he had wished to revenge himself, why had he not done so when the insult had been offered him?

Hudson, the manager of the T Down ranch, had discharged him—had not only discharged him but had booted him out of the door of the ranch-house. And Mexico's gun had reposed in its holster! Why had he not used it? *Why?* Certainly not because opportunity had lacked. Hudson had stood in the ranch-house door, his arms folded over his chest, as he watched Mexico scramble to his feet. His hands had been nowhere near his guns; Mexico could have replied to the insult with his own weapon. Why had he not done so? He knew. Hudson had known. Hudson had laughed grimly as Mexico had got to his feet, and had jeered him as he slunk away to rope his pony in the corral. It had been the Fear.

That had been two months ago. And now Mexico lay on his back in the mesquite thicket, his head pillowed on his saddle, his gaze on the Gila hills. Misfortune had followed him grimly. It had pursued him from the T Down ranch to Silver City, where he had lost his last dollar at faro; it had clung persistently to him from Silver City eastward through the Mimbres Mountains, where he had been refused employment in the mines; it had borne heavily upon him at San Lorenzo, and, later, at Donna Ana, where he had been forced to part with his pony for enough money to keep him from starving. After he had left Donna Ana it had kept pace with him until he had reached Mesilla, where he again lost his last dollar at faro. He had described a complete circle in attempting to elude it, and he had failed. He had become convinced that prosperity lay only with Hudson, and so, like a whipped dog, he was going back to the T Down to whine himself into favor.

For perhaps an hour he lay, meditating into the shadows of the distant hills, while the sun swam slowly in the vast arch; while a gray film—the forerunner of the dusk—began to settle down over the land; while the great dome of blue sky paled for the coming of the stars. Then, when the hills lighted with the colors of the sinking sun, when the flaming streaks died down into orange and gold, Mexico rose, swung his saddle over his shoulder, and took up the trail towards the T Down.

For five years had Mexico worked for Hudson of the T Down. It had been a long time for any puncher to work for one manager, and Mexico had begun to believe that he was destined to work for Hudson always. He really liked Hudson, liked him as well as his Mexican blood would permit—with a fawning, idolatrous affection that would have permitted him to kiss the hand that had smitten him, had the manager allowed it.

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But there was that other blood—the Lenehan blood—that surged occasionally through his veins; the blood that kindled his eye and stiffened his muscles and made him, at times, almost brave. That was the blood that had roused him many times to the point where he could feel the desire for manly, courageous revenge; when he could have whipped a dozen Hudsons—had it not been for the Fear. Hudson was a small man physically, Mexico was many times his superior, and yet there was something about Hudson's manner, in the unflinching, sinister glance of his eye, that held Mexico in fawning subjugation.

The Fear had ruined him; it had sent him from the T Down—disgraced. It had sent him away from the ranch with his veins nearly bursting with rage and mortification; it had caused him to toss uneasily at night in his blanket, gnashing his teeth impotently; it was the Fear that was sending him back to the T Down—back to beg Hudson to give him another chance.

Another chance! Ah, how his cheeks crimsoned as he thought of that time. As he stumbled through a draw and out upon a ragged piece of plain that paralleled the two glistening lines of steel marking the right of way of the Southern Pacific Railway he rehearsed the incident in his mind. It had been such a ridiculous thing, now that it was over. He had been one of a party of T Down men that had gone on an expedition against cattle thieves. The party had caught one of the thieves in the Piñon hills, just northwest of Silver City, and had gone on with the search for the remainder of the band, leaving Mexico to guard the captive. The thief had not been bound, but had been disarmed; for the men of Mexico's party had reasoned that Mexico, wearing a gun, would be more than a match for the captive—and they had not time to delay. But they had not considered the Fear.

When they had returned with the other rustlers Mexico's man had departed, and Mexico himself, cursing incoherently, sat at the base of a tree, bound with his own rope. He told the story with trembling lips and streaming eyes—the shameful story.

Directly after the party had disappeared the rustler had engaged him in conversation, dilating with much earnestness upon the fierceness of a Mexican jaguar, reported to be lurking in the vicinity. The rustler knew Mexico, and with diabolical art had worked upon the imagination of his victim, describing the animal's heroic proportions and dwelling eloquently upon its predilection for human flesh. Then at the psychological moment he had sharply warned Mexico that the animal was behind him. Mexico had turned, his fear overcoming his caution, and upon that instant the rustler had plucked his weapon from its holster.

The game was an old one; many of the men were in favor of awarding Mexico the rustler's place at the rope's end, but calmer counsel prevailed and Mexico was led back to the T Down to be publicly kicked out by Hudson. That was all. Now he stumbled under the weight of the heavy saddle as he reached the railroad track and swung mechanically along over the ties.

For a mile or more he traveled, while the darkening shadows grew and the pale disk of the moon swam in the clear blue arch overhead, lighting up his way, glistening upon the two rails that disappeared somewhere in the darkness of the foothills he was approaching. He came into the lighter shadows of the hills presently, into a cut where the side walls rose above him, many feet. Entering this cut, he was proceeding absently, his mind on his disgrace, when he heard a sudden sound, as of rustling leaves; a sharp, cracking rumble, a clatter, a menacing swish—and a great boulder, weighing many hundreds of pounds, dropped with a crash upon the track in front of him, rolled over upon its flat side, poised gracefully, and then settled down directly between the rails.

Mexico dodged involuntarily and then stood still, paralyzed into inaction, the Fear gripping his heart and bringing the damp sweat to his forehead. A little time elapsed before he went forward and placed his hands upon the boulder—shrinkingly, as though it were a living thing that might arise to rend him. He laughed presently to think of the scare it had given him, wiping the damp sweat from his brow and laying the saddle down beside the track. For a long time he stood beside the boulder, trembling. Around him had settled a new silence; a silence full of vagueness, of strange portent, of premonitory whisperings.

At first Mexico heard it faintly, as though it were in some dream and he could not catch its significance. He stood beside the boulder, his arms upon it—resting while he strained his ears for a repetition of the

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sound. And presently it came again—the faint, long-drawn plaint of a locomotive whistle. Mexico smiled reminiscently; many times while at the T Down had he heard it, and, riding line in the twilight or going on the night watch in the basin, had watched the glaring headlight swing into view around Devil's Curve; had seen the glimmering lights in the windows of the coaches, had heard the dull roar, the shrill hoot of the whistle; had halted his pony to listen while the roar died away among the distant foothills, and silence had come again. It was the express—west bound.

Mexico leaned upon the boulder, mechanically computing distances. The first warning whistle had come from the long level behind Devil's Curve. Had he been in the basin at that moment he would have halted his pony to watch for the headlight. An instant later he would have seen it and would have been wondering at the desperate courage of men who found it in their hearts to drive this rushing, roaring monster through the darkness and the dangers of the night.

Devil's Curve was miles away from the point where he stood beside the boulder. Yet not so many miles after all. Ten, he estimated, roughly. He had heard Hudson say that after leaving Devil's Curve the train traveled nearly a mile a minute, for the track was straight and level. At that rate it was due at the cut in ten minutes at most.

Ten minutes! Why, he could hear the rail singing now; he could hear the distant roar and rumble. He thrilled suddenly at the thought of that great mass of living iron and steel hurling itself towards him out of the night! At him? No, not at him—for he would scurry up the steep side of the cut and——! But the boulder!

He shrank away from it, staggering with the horror of the thought that had burst upon him with crushing suddenness. The boulder! It would wreck the train! God! what havoc! He could see now; it was like a revelation. He closed his eyes to the scene that was flashing through his mind. Great masses of twisted steel and iron, of splintered wood and flaming ruins; of mangled bodies, of shrieks of terror and groans of agony, of contorted faces——!

But he could not act—the Fear had gripped him. He shuddered and cringed away from the boulder, leaning against the steep wall of the cut. Years before he had seen a train piled up at the bottom of a steep declivity on Devil's Curve. Faces of the injured still stared at him out of the mass of wreckage; groans of agony still assailed his ears. He knew what inaction meant, yet the Fear was upon him, the Fear that made his knees knock together, made his heart swell to the bursting-point, made his breath cough in his throat—made his great body a mass of piteously shuddering flesh, without strength, without power of movement.

His father had not been cast in that mold! His father! Over Mexico surged a wave of mighty feeling. How he would like to be like his father! Something snapped in his brain; he became on the instant a being of heroic impulses, of quivering brawn impelled by the tremendous power of self-reconstruction.

His sluggish muscles, deadened by the Fear, became rippling mountains of straining strength; he saw clearly, he knew what to do and how to do it. With a snarling, incoherent curse he hurled himself at the huge boulder, setting his shoulder fiercely against it and struggling with all his great strength to topple it from the track. But the effort was fruitless. The boulder did not budge; in its stubborn inanimation it seemed a hellish, mocking irritation to him. He stepped back a pace and hurled himself upon it again; he struck blindly, furiously at it with his naked fists, until the blood ran in great streams from his knuckles.

His efforts were still fruitless, but they had brought into his heart and mind the tingling intoxication of conscious courage—a realization of dormant power and spirit. He left off striking at the rock and scrambled up the steep wall of the cut into a thicket of scrub oak, where he fell to work with demoniacal energy, crashing among the dried brush and tearing up great masses of it with his bared hands.

Gathering up all that he had collected, he stumbled breathlessly to the side of the wall and sprang clear, rolling heavily to the bottom, half stunned and partially blinded by the stinging sand that, cloud-like, had followed him down. But he had clung to the scrub oak brush, and he piled an armful of it against the side of the boulder and then went down on his knees beside it while he searched feverishly for a match.

Seventy-five feet from the boulder the express came to a dead stop Lanterns

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gleamed in the darkness of the cut, trainmen hurried forward, heads were poked out of the windows of the coaches, voices were raised in sharp inquiry. The engineer clambered down from his cab and came towards the boulder, beside which stood Mexico—a picturesque figure framed in the circular glare of the headlight.

"What——" began the engineer, but hesitated, his face paling through the grime. Swarthy, grim, foreboding, Mexico assuredly did look the train-robber. The engineer retreated a step and elevated both hands above his head. From the cab the fireman saw the movement and uttered the sharp, dread warning: "Hold-up!"

For an instant Mexico remained in the glare of the headlight, his lips curving into a grim smile. They misunderstood; they thought him a desperado; they were afraid of him! Afraid! That word belonged to the past. He was no longer afraid, for the blood of his father rioted through his veins; the paternal side of the Lenehan house had come into its own! Here, in the silence and darkness, with the express bearing down upon him out of the night, had the miracle been wrought. They thought him a train-robber! Why should he not *be* a train-robber? For the first time in his life the thought assailed him and he staggered under it. *Why not?*

The engineer still kept his hands elevated; his face seemed to express wonder that Mexico had delayed making a hostile move. From beyond the headlight came voices raised in fright. Mexico heard them; heard the closing of windows, the screams of women, the guttural warnings of men. He heard—and exulted. Like a flash a change came over his face—it hardened; his lips sneered, his eyes were glittering pin-points. With a bound he was at the engineer's side, his heavy six-shooter in his hand, his voice hard and filled with the menace of a cold recklessness.

"Hold her!" he ordered, sharply. "Git back to your cab and don't move out of it!" A trainman came out of the darkness, his lantern bobbing, a revolver gleaming in one hand. There was a spurt of flame from Mexico's side, and the trainman crumpled up and pitched forward between the rails. Mexico turned his weapon a very little, so that it covered the engineer.

"Git!" he commanded.

Watching the engineer, keeping a wary eye on the train, he reached the side of the dead trainman and secured the fallen pistol. Then he sprang into the shadow of the nearest coach, and, crouching against it, discharged the weapon into the air, taking care that there was sufficient interval between reports to lead passengers and crew to believe that he had assistance in his work.

A curious passenger opened a window and poked his head out inquiringly. Mexico's own deadly .45 spluttered spitefully, its leaden missile shattered the sash, and the passenger withdrew his head in undignified haste. Instantly Mexico swung up the steps and into the doorway of the coach, where he stood, a foreboding figure, facing the terror-stricken occupants.

In his new rôle Mexico was coldly deliberate. If he felt a thrill of the old Fear he gave very little evidence of it. Like the masters of the profession he issued his orders briefly:

"Shell out, gentlemen!"

Towards the rear of the coach two of the more hardy passengers stood erect, apparently unawed by Mexico's presence. Towards these two the latter's gun was instantly directed, preceding the sharp command:

"You two gentlemen who are too polite to take seats while I'm in the car will pass the hat! Step lively!"

One of the two men started instantly to obey, the other lingered tardily. Mexico's revolver roared venomously, the man turned half around and sank limply to the floor.

There could be but little doubt now that Mexico meant business.

An hour later the express stopped at a little way-station named Gage, and the engineer exhibited to the station-agent a saddle that he had found beside the track in the cut. The saddle was a silver-mounted one, such as might have been the property of any thrifty puncher, but engraved upon a silver plate upon the high pommel were some initials that caught the keen gaze of the station-agent.

"M. L. L," they read. The station-agent smote his hands together with decision. "Mexico Lenehan, of the T Down ranch!" he said.

Within an hour the telegraph had flashed the news of the robbery over the entire county, and officers from surrounding towns were on their way to the scene of the hold-up, all with perfect descriptions of Mexico.

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At midnight the sheriff of Grant County rode up to the door of the T Down ranch-house and, calling Hudson out, curtly informed him that as a deputy he was expected to assist in the search for the desperado.

Three days later, lying on his belly in a thicket in the Gila hills, Mexico concentrated his whole power of sight upon the dozen moving specks that came always nearer to him. These specks had followed him for the last twenty-four hours, having picked up his trail at a certain crossing of the Gila River, where he had killed a nester for refusing him food. He had secured the food afterward, but the report of his pistol had brought the whole bevy of man-hunters about him like bees. From that time until now it had been a grim game, with him as the center of interest.

He was watching the man-hunters; not with the fear that had choked him sometimes, but with a resolute heart, with sneering lips, with a furious, burning passion that kept his blood in continual riot. The sensation was new to him and he reveled in it. It was as though he had experienced an instantaneous regeneration; as though he had become a new man, with a new heart, with a new brain, with new desires; as though now, at the age of twenty-six, he had just begun to live.

He drew himself out of the thicket and stood erect—where he could get a better view of his pursuers. He knew there was no escape; he was on the summit of the highest hill; the specks were all about him; they were sure to find him sooner or later, and he welcomed the time when the first man should come within range of his revolver.

He hoped Hudson, his old manager, would be one of the specks. He had feared Hudson. Hudson had booted him from the T Down. Yet that seemed to have been in another time. He wanted to meet his old manager on the crest of this last hill so that he might prove to him that man to man he was the braver. He had shown the world that he was no coward.

In a hazy sort of way he realized that the specks were drawing nearer; behind a bald rock that jutted out on the hillside about a hundred feet from where he stood crouched a man with a rifle. The man seemed to be having some trouble with the weapon—he fumbled with the injector. There was a snarling smile on Mexico's face as he jerked his heavy revolver from its holster and snapped a shot at the man. He saw the man's rifle drop, saw him press both hands to his head and disappear behind the rock.

Other specks now became visible on the hillside; from some great distance a rifle spoke; its bullet sang in the thicket at Mexico's side. He laughed aloud. Was this Mexico Lenehan—Mexico Lenehan, who laughed under fire? It couldn't be Mexico, for Mexico had died over there on the tracks of the Southern Pacific when he had lighted the fire that had warned the engineer of the express. Mexico had died, but Lenehan had lived. It was Lenehan who had beaten the Fear; it was Lenehan who had robbed the express, and who was going to show the men who had called him a coward that he was braver than they. This was the way his father had died, besieged by man-hunters who had held him at bay for days, fighting over every inch of his retreat and exacting frightful toll before he had finally been brought down with a rifle-bullet. It was the way he would die—worthy descendant of a worthy sire! He thought of his mother, and spat towards his enemies as though he would show them that her blood had been forever purged from him. For he had conquered the Fear.

An hour passed. Mexico grimly reloaded his revolver. He had forsaken the thicket; his body was now partly concealed behind a rock ledge that formed the corner of an angle leading—Mexico knew not where. In an hour his enemies had advanced. Two of them lay in grotesque attitudes upon the face of the hillside; another was stretched prone on his back; still another was crumpled into a pitiful heap at the edge of a post oak thicket. But several more, grim and watchful, with life in their bodies, were creeping from rock to rock, each eager to be the first to speed the bullet that would end his career.

He warily poked the muzzle of his revolver around the edge of the rock and, holding the butt in both hands, took careful aim at a head that had come into view from behind another rock not thirty feet from him. A stealthy sound behind wheeled him with lightning swiftness; he was on his feet with a snarl of rage to face—Hudson, his old manager!

The latter stood at the corner of the angle,

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not ten feet from Mexico. The blue barrel of his .45 projected with sinister steadiness, his eyes were brown and smiling and pleasant, as always. And yet in them was a certain quietness and steadfastness of purpose that had always aroused in Mexico an uncomfortable sensation. He might have killed Mexico; Mexico might have killed him; for their guns were trained upon each other; it needed only a slight pressure of the trigger-finger to do the work. And yet Mexico's finger did not move. Silently the two men stared across the intervening space, their eyes fighting the battle that their fingers refused. At length Hudson, quietly, steadily, in the voice he had long used in issuing commands to Mexico, issued his orders now:

"Drop that gun!"

Like a man who has been long under a spell, Mexico started at the sound of his old manager's voice; a chill tingled down his spine, his face blanched, his lips quivered; the fingers holding the weapon slowly relaxed, allowing the heavy .45 to clatter noisily upon the rock at his feet.

"You —— fool!" said Hudson. "And so the Lenehan blood had to have its fling?"

But Mexico did not answer; he was fighting down the stealthy chill of Fear that swept him from brain to heels.

The Disappearance of Signor Caroli

by Albert Kinross

THE district of Covent Garden is celebrated for its fruit, its flowers, its vegetables, its opera-house, and, last but not least, its publishers.

It was June, and the opera season was at its height, the flowers, the fruit, the vegetables at their most dazzling, odoriferous, nutritive or aromatic zenith, the publishers at the crest of the year's trade. In brief, Covent Garden, the heart and central pulse of the metropolis, was beating as it beats but once in the twelve months. From rosy dawn until the midnight chimes it throbbed; three broken hours of sleep, and then it sprang to life again; the rumbling vans bore down upon it; porters, salesmen, buyers arrived yawning; after these the publishers and those that make or mar our literature; and finally the stream that poured forth nightly to the opera-house to hear Caroli.

The whole world knows Caroli; he is its greatest living tenor. Caroli is unique. But once in a generation does such a voice appear miraculously. Now it is the magnet that draws all New York to the Metropolitan; now it is heard in Paris, Moscow, Vienna or Berlin; and in June all London flocks to Covent Garden. For at last Caroli

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is with us once again—the superb, the golden, the magnificent Caroli!

A native of dusty Syracuse in Sicily, swarthy as the Moor, plump, passionate, with opulent shock of coal-black hair and fierce mustachios, he treads the boards and fills the opera-house with that all-conquering voice. Unforced, artless by all seeming, it wells out, as nightingale's above the velvet stillness, as skylark's rapture free in the azure. Queens find themselves again under that spell; peeresses remember the boy who was too poor; school-girls see the prince of their high destiny; while proud New Yorkers recollect that they have lost their souls and feel a sudden, drafty vacuum. Even the critics escape their awful mission for a space and find life good. Such is Caroli, and such the man's unequalled glowing voice.

It was in June—the twenty-third of that brave month, to be precise—and Giuseppe Caroli had abruptly disappeared. Without warning and without a sign he had vanished, and none could tell what had become of him.

The performance over, he had left the opera-house as usual, intending to walk the short distance that separated Covent Garden from his hotel. When in London he always puts up at the Modena; and there a merry supper-party was awaiting him. They waited in vain, and, growing impatient, consumed the supper regardless of their host. For Caroli had asked them, and himself drawn up the menu.

They were Lady Bielenstein, who never misses a Caroli night, and hardly any other night, so passionate is her devotion to grand opera and its starry executants; her husband, Sir Bruno Bielenstein, the famous banker; Lord de Crouche, the gifted amateur; the Countess of Severne, quite the smartest woman in London, and Empoli, the baritone. Closing time drew near, but no Caroli. Surely he had not met with an accident; surely he had not lost his way, or been run over, or—imagination suggested a hundred terrible possibilities, all equally absurd.

"These things do not happen," said Lord de Crouche; but Empoli, whose southern and histrionic temperament was more impressionable, had begun to grow tearful. Beyond the name of his hotel, the tenor knew but two words of English, and these he no doubt mispronounced, cried Empoli. What *had* become of the great man? Never before had he delayed like this, and especially on a night when he had asked so distinguished a company to sup with him.

It was unpardonable. Lady Bielenstein, the celebrated patron, that woman of so exquisite a taste, so opulent a hospitality, Lord de Crouche, the Countess of Severne, and even that old moneybags, Sir Bruno Bielenstein—would they ever forgive the inexplicable affront? Thus, or nearly thus, Empoli, who, besides being tearful, had now grown eloquent.

Closing time arrived, perforce the party separated—and still no Caroli! Empoli apologized for his degenerate compatriot, and saw the ladies to the cars that waited in the rubber-paved yard.

Meanwhile, the performance over, Caroli had left the opera-house as usual, intending to walk the short distance that separated Covent Garden from his hotel.

II

MENTION has already been made of the publishers that are so distinguished an ornament of Covent Garden's most prominent thoroughfare. Their name is legion, and they golf religiously each Sunday in the calendar. On week-days they attend to business and are visible to the aspiring man or woman of genius. In the main and speaking generally, theirs is a happy life. But all are not so fortunate; and some, indeed, have been known to close their shutters and seek some other and less speculative field of enterprise.

At the period wherein this story opens, none was more unfortunate and more unhappy than William Somerset. He had already closed his shutters, and, though he sought courageously and day by day, he had not yet found some other and less speculative field of enterprise. William was musical, and this had been his ruin.

William Somerset was musical. You will find his imprint on a dozen splendid failures; there is, for instance, his "Lives of the Great Composers," a series that, while doing him infinite credit as a publisher, fell flat as Salisbury Plain. There are his "Biographies of Famous Pianists," his "Monographs of the Master Musicians," and finally his "Encyclopedia of Music." It was the latter that brought William

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Somerset to ultimate ruin. One day he stood in Henrietta Street, his sole realizable assets a music-stool and a cottage piano by Messrs. Hopper. And there he was joined by Adam Newman.

William Somerset and Adam Newman, as is so often the case, struck up an informal acquaintance because both were hungry and both were unemployed. Newman had just come out of prison, he explained. He had been arrested on an atrocious and unfounded charge; and the authorities, being unable to prove his guilt, had at last released him. In business as an itinerant coal-merchant, the fragments of a human corpse had been found admixed with his coal. He had referred the police to the source whence he had obtained the coal; but that source, it appeared, was to-day undiscoverable.

So Adam, after a reasonable period of mystery and detention, had been released. During this interval and unfortunately for him, the stock of vegetables wherewith he had just replenished his empty coal-cart had gone rotten, and, therefore, though possessed of a horse and cart, he had neither goods to sell nor money wherewith to buy a fresh supply.

William Somerset listened sympathetically and thoughtfully. He remembered the case; there had, at the time, been something about it in the newspapers. He mentioned that he was very musical and that he rarely read anything beyond reports of operas, concerts and pianoforte recitals; he also mentioned that he had failed in business as a publisher. And so, having exchanged these confidences, the two men separated, going their solitary and harassed ways.

Next day they met again. William Somerset had passed a feverish and sleepless night, yet was all smiles and buoyant optimism; Adam Newman said that the owner of the shed wherein he stored himself, together with his horse and cart, refused, unless immediate payment were forthcoming, to keep the three of them another hour. He didn't wish to be hard, he had said, but business was business. The horse and cart were standing round the corner.

"Let's have a look at 'em," said Somerset; and Newman brought them round for his inspection.

Newman, though pigeon-breasted and atrociously dressed, made a fine figure as he came clattering into Henrietta Street. Upright on his cart, he handled the ribbons, encouraging his gallant steed with phrases learned behind the plow or harrow. The classical scholars who passed that way, with manuscripts ready for the classical publishers, compared him to a charioteer of ancient Rome. Excerpts from Gibbon or "Ben-Hur" escaped their shaven lips as he came clattering into Henrietta Street. Poor lad! a harmless yokel and unlettered, he had forsaken the country for the town, was seeking his fortune in the stony-hearted capital . . .

"First rate!" cried William Somerset, as Adam pulled up sharp beside the curb. "Yes, it's the very thing—the very thing!"

William had spoken; William now was sure.

A feverish and sleepless night is usually a night of wild ideas and inspirations. The ex-publisher had indulged in the wildest; and to-day he was ready with an outrage unequaled even in the outrageous annals of Henrietta Street. It filled him, took ten good years from off his age; it buoyed him up and shifted leaden weights from his slim shoulders.

"Swear to follow my directions!" he cried; and as he was an undoubted gentleman, though temporarily under a cloud, Adam touched his forelock and swore. For Adam had been brought up to do what the gentry and, especially, the clergy told him to do, without question and without base thought of self.

"If you obey me, our two fortunes are as good as made," pursued Somerset. "From grim and hopeless poverty we will soar to riches, titles, pomp and honor. I will be content with a simple peerage; you, I feel assured, will attract less attention if you accept no higher distinction than a knighthood, or, at the most, a baronetcy. But to-day let us be practical," he added. "Do you think you could lay hands on an empty potato-sack? The market is just round the corner."

"Won't these do?" Adam had produced five empty coal-sacks, relics of the day when he was in that trade.

"Excellent!" cried Somerset. "The very thing!"

III

GIUSEPPE CAROLI, the great tenor, had washed the grease-paint from his swarthy countenance and exchanged a pair of lavender silk tights for ordinary trousers;

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and with this change he had ceased to be the Huguenot of Meyerbeer's famous opera and reverted once more to the twentieth century and the Roman Catholic faith. His dresser completed the transformation; and now the tenor, attired immaculately, strolled from his room and so to the stage-door. At his hotel, the palatial Modena, he was giving a supper-party that night. Caroli was all impatience to sit down with his guests.

The stage-door of the Covent Garden Opera-House opens on a narrow by-way, lively enough during the animated hours that surround a performance or rehearsal, but, when the vast theater is emptied, a solitary, deserted and evil-looking place. At the moment in which Caroli issued forth, two men, accompanied by a horse and coal-cart, lurked in its shadows; otherwise it was bare and silent and untenanted.

Caroli came out of the stage-door; the two men moved hurriedly from the lee-side of the coal-cart. Strong hands seized Caroli; a sack was flung over his head. Before he could utter his two words of English he had been thrown into the coal-cart, where, swiftly and dexterously, he was gagged and bound.

The coal-cart moved away with him and his two captors. There followed a drive that seemed to last eternities, broken only by one short stoppage, during which some heavy article seemed to be hoisted on to the coal-cart. When the gag was taken from his mouth, the sack from his head, Caroli found himself in the open country, and a fleecy moon was setting in the west, a golden sun was rising in the east. It was morning.

Caroli rubbed his eyes, and cried, "Brigands! Bandits! Carabineers and police!"

Bunnies astir in the young wheat and oats heard him with dismay and fled back to their underground abodes; alarmed blackbirds flew to cover, piping for dear life; a cuckoo's mocking voice answered him. Otherwise it was a still and lovely morning, late in June.

Caroli sat up and gazed about him. A cottage piano and music-stool stood on the cart, and with these were two men, one of whom spoke Italian. This was William Somerset.

"*Buon giorno*," said he, and produced a razor and a pair of scissors. In a trice Caroli's opulent shock of coal-black hair was shorn, his fierce mustachios scattered. Adam Newman sat on his chest, while William Somerset operated. It was explained to Caroli that in future he would have to sing out-of-doors. Somerset would accompany him on the piano; Adam would drive them all from place to place, and go round with the hat.

"Brigands — bandits — carabineers and police!" shrieked Caroli. There followed a wild outburst in Sicilian, in Italian; he even let off his two words of English, one of which was "Yes" and the other "No."

Somerset smiled grimly. "No one here will understand you," he said. "And if you don't sing, you will starve, and what is worse, we will thrash you with this whip." And he cracked the carter's whip that belonged to the coal-cart and gave the tenor a taste of it there and then,

"Oh!" yelped Caroli, and rubbed his wounded ear. "My voice will be recognized!" said the tenor, recovering. "There is only one such voice in all the world!"

"What will be, will be—*che sara sara*," answered Somerset; "but meanwhile you will have to sing. No doubt you will be missed at Covent Garden, and the police will probably search for you high and low; but they will never guess that in the cropped and shaven rascal who wanders with two such disreputable bounders as myself and our friend Adam, there is hidden the great, the all-conquering tenor, Giuseppe Caroli."

At this compliment, evidently sincere and spoken from the other's heart, Caroli bowed.

"Now change your clothes for these," pursued Somerset, unfolding a worn tweed suit which he had obtained on credit from a second-hand clothes-dealer who, in more prosperous days, had contributed a volume to his "Lives of the Great Composers." Caroli hesitated. "I can't have you singing about the place in swallow-tails; that would increase our chances of detection. We have changed your face; now we must change your body."

Caroli understood. "Scoundrels!" he hissed. "Thieves—traitors—villains—murderers!"

It was all no use. The inhuman Somerset stood over him with the carter's whip while he exchanged his immaculate evening suit for these threadbare and thrice-shabby tweeds.

By this time the moon had set and the sun had climbed to a point that indicated

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the beginning of the rural day. Already blue wisps of wood-smoke were rising from cottage chimneys. At last a farm laborer came along the road. Caroli said "Yes" and "No" to him and "*Io sono Caroli;*" but it was all no good, and the man never so much as stopped and answered him.

Then Caroli cursed England and the English for a full quarter of an hour, till Somerset said: "It's about time you sang for our breakfast," and Adam Newman cracked his whip and cried: "Gee up, ole lady! Steady does it. That's the way!"

IV

OF COURSE Caroli was missed; of course the newspapers, the police, the public were full of his abrupt and sudden disappearance. It was the sensation of the hour; it threatened to dislocate the whole opera-house, the whole season. Lady Bielenstein, the famous banker's no less famous wife, was inconsolable.

"Vatever shall ve do vidout him!" was her constant cry, her constant lamentation; "I go no more to de Opera till he is found," she vowed, and turned to poker-patience and pound-a-point bridge as a distraction. As Sir Bruno Bielenstein won most of her losings and she herself stuck to her winnings, the exchange from Covent Garden to the card-table had its brighter side.

Empoli, Lord de Crouche and Lady Severne moved heaven and earth—but no Caroli! The baritone's state was piteous in the extreme. Sobbing, he swore that never again would he come to London unless the missing man were produced instantly. "Instantly!" he cried, and, had he not been bald, would have torn out his hair. These foreigners are so extravagant. De Crouche subscribed one hundred guineas to a fund that had been opened by one of the most enterprising newspapers. The reward was to go to whosoever should produce Caroli, alive or dead. Lady Severne said she had never thought much of his singing, and that she was glad somebody else would now get a chance.

Meanwhile the great Sicilian was wandering up and down the land, shaven and cropped and dressed in an old slop-suit, singing for his daily bread and that of his two companions and a middle-aged horse. He sang wonderfully; never had he sung so well; the more wonderfully he sang, he argued, the prompter would be the recognition of his unequaled voice.

At the first house before which Adam Newman halted, the owner, a burly farmer, set the dog on them. Somerset, mounted on the coal-cart and the piano-stool, was deep in an air from "I Pagliacci;" Caroli's marvelous tenor was filling the morning with its splendor. The farmer had come out and unchained a bull-terrier. Caroli made one supreme and dazzling effort that would have melted a heart of stone.

Instead, "Now you be off!" had cried the outraged farmer. "I don't want any of you dirty foreigners a-singing in my yard!" And, addressing the bull-terrier, "Seize him, Dick—seize him—hitch on to his calves—good boy—seize him. That's right, boy!"

The bull-terrier had approached Caroli and was making as if to obey. Aghast, the tenor had come to an abrupt and terrified conclusion and climbed hurriedly aboard the coal-cart; from which comparatively safe vantage-ground he had addressed both dog and farmer with all the eloquence at his command.

Adam Newman, not at all astonished by this unfortunate turn of events, whipped up the horse and, pursued by barkings, threats and oaths too violent for repetition, the three drove off to the next halting-place. William Somerset was still cheerful and assured of fortune, rebuking the others with "One swallow does not make a Summer, nor one kick-out a frost." And he was right. The organist of a village-church gave them breakfast that morning, though, being a poor man, and, like most organists, underpaid, he could not give them any money.

"He's got a good voice," said this individual, referring to Caroli, "but why on earth can't he sing in English? Now a good ballad, or a tender drawing-room song, and lots of people would pay a copper or two to hear him."

These two initial experiences were characteristic of the dismal fortnight during which Caroli sang, Adam drove, and Somerset accompanied on the cottage piano. Either they were turned out bodily and threatened with personal violence, or else they were given a trifle and advised to furnish themselves with an English program instead of that incomprehensible Italian. Poor old Caroli! He wilted and grew lean

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under these rebuffs, so that Somerset and even Adam pitied him. Had it not been for the loose cash which Somerset, as an afterthought, looked for and found in the tenor's original dress-suit, the trio would have starved. But even that useful sum was soon expended.

Things were growing desperate with these three men when the ex-publisher, after another of his feverish and sleepless nights, announced a second and more vital inspiration. He would not say exactly what it was, but he so far committed himself as to order Adam to turn the horse's head and take the road to London. He was resolved to play one last and final card, and should that not succeed—bah, failure was impossible! He scouted the base, the craven, the enervating idea.

Failure was impossible, he cried, prophesying in that wilderness, purged and uplifted by the daring of this second scheme, its triumphant and classic simplicity. To the metropolis they would go, braving all, risking all. Their fortunes—his and Adam's—were already as good as made, invested, and in the vaults of a safe deposit company.

Before reentering the town Caroli was again submitted to the indignity of an enforced hair-cut; and the ex-publisher only stopped short of blacking the tenor's face because a fortnight's growth of sable beard had made it black enough already. So that when at last they reached London, with Caroli in his slop-suit, burnt by the sun, reduced by hard living, and cropped of head though unshorn of jowl, neither that great patron, Lady Bielenstein, nor even his bosom friend, Empoli, would have recognized in this ambulant scarecrow the famous singer who had so strangely and unaccountably disappeared.

V

THE newspapers have already done full justice to the hue and cry that was raised over Caroli's disappearance, so there is no need to deal extensively with that aspect of his case. High and low he was sought for, advertised for, and theorized about; yet not even the wildest of newspaper scribes or police officials ever hit upon the simple and ingenious truth. Instead of the countryside, they ransacked the Italian Colony of Hatton Garden; instead of plain, honest Adam Newman, they questioned cab-drivers; instead of fields and lanes and villages and somnolent little towns, they enquired at seaports and disturbed the suburbs.

Of course their search was hopeless; the wonder lasted its nine days; a new tenor was sent for and he did his best, poor fellow. By the time that Adam Newman, driving his horse and cart and passengers, arrived in London, Caroli and Caroli's mysterious disappearance were all but forgotten. "So much the better!" cried William Somerset, and set about the execution of his plan.

The horse and cart were driven into London, and then straight to Berkeley Square and Porlock House. You doubtless recognize the address? It is the princely residence of Sir Bruno and Lady Bielenstein. "Halt!" cried the ex-publisher; and Adam halted.

It was night, and, climbing on to the lid of the cottage piano, Somerset could see her ladyship seated at the card-table. So bright indeed was the room that he could even see her revoke.

"The very thing, the very house!" he cried; for with the magnificent hostess were Lord de Crouche, that gifted amateur and connoisseur, Lady Severne, and old Sir Bruno, all patrons and box-holders at the great opera-house. He had counted only on Lady Bielenstein and the wonderful taste and unerring ear of which he had read so much in the journals that chronicle such things. He had counted only on her ladyship, and here was a very galaxy of plutocrats, famous, so report said, for the same lavish expenditure, the same passionate adoration of the beautiful as expressed in operatic song! Caroli should do his very best; and William Somerset would see that he did it.

"Now sing, my friend," cried the ex-publisher; "in the drawing-room above sits Lady Bielenstein!" And he struck some opening chords on the piano.

Caroli had caught the name. "Lady Bielenstein!" he shrieked. "She worships me, she idolizes me, she is my devoted slave! I will go to her, I will force her door!"

"No, you won't; the footman would put you out on sight," had interposed the unabashed ex-publisher; and with that he produced a small hand-mirror which he placed under the eyes of the frenzied tenor.

One look was enough for Caroli. Unshaven, cropped, the face that met his own

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convulsed him. "You are right," he answered sadly, "the footman would fling me down the very stairs. But," he added, darkling, "she will recognize my voice, she will know me—you dare not let me sing to her!"

"I must risk that," said William Somerset, and picked out the prelude to a favorite air from "Madame Butterfly."

Caroli began to sing. He was singing for life, for liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; Caroli had never sung as he sang that night.

A poor girl who was selling roses at two a penny stayed to listen; she stood rooted to the curb, and the tears began to roll down her thin face. She was listening for the first and the last time in her life to Giuseppe Caroli. She did not know that; she did not understand a word of the song to which she was listening. She knew only that a voice had suddenly broken in on her, and that she wished it would never, never stop; that it would go on always, always, so that she might never, never waken and sell roses again at two a penny. She stood there and wept openly, but she did not know that she was weeping. And Caroli sang on, singing as he had never sung before.

Up-stairs in the white drawing-room of Porlock House, Lady Bielenstein asked Sir Bruno to touch the bell. A footman answered it.

"Give those people sixpence to go away," said Lady Bielenstein.

And the footman replied: "Yes, my lady," and went downstairs again.

A minute later he was on the curb with the sixpence. William Somerset was on the lookout for him and ready. The footman delivered his message and the coin. Somerset immediately flung the silver at his head and then informed Caroli of what had happened.

The tenor's song had ceased. Caroli was weeping bitterly, as these Sicilians will weep. Suddenly a handful of stale roses was forced on him, and five damp coppers. It was all that poor girl had to give—all her money and all her roses. Caroli wiped his eyes and she had disappeared.

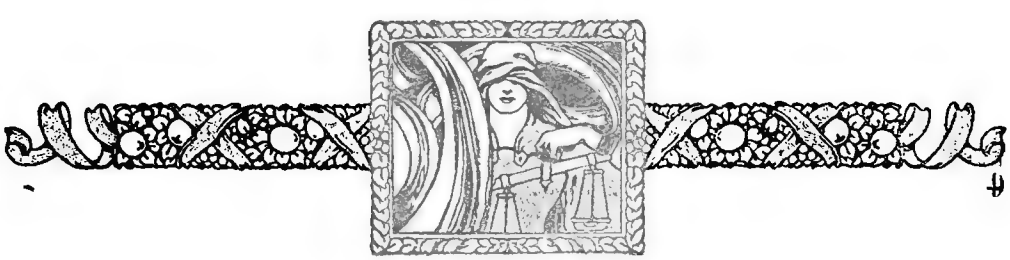
VI

LATE that night the great tenor was restored to the world and Covent Garden.

"He's no good to us," the ex-publisher had declared; and Adam Newman, who had thought the same after that first opening song in the farmyard, expressed a similar opinion.

So Caroli was driven back to the stage-door of the great opera-house and there let loose. He would never tell what had become of him, never give any account of his wanderings and that strange disappearance. Of all that had happened in the interval his lips were sealed. What a failure he had been—and how could he admit it! Never—never! His pride, his vanity, his egotism, his professional prudence alike rejected the idea.

But ever afterward a new and superlative quality was in his voice,—you yourself may have noticed it?—for Caroli, thanks to Adam Newman and William Somerset, had learned that between preeminent success and preeminent failure there is but a step, a thread invisible, and God alone may thrust one over that border-line or hold one back.



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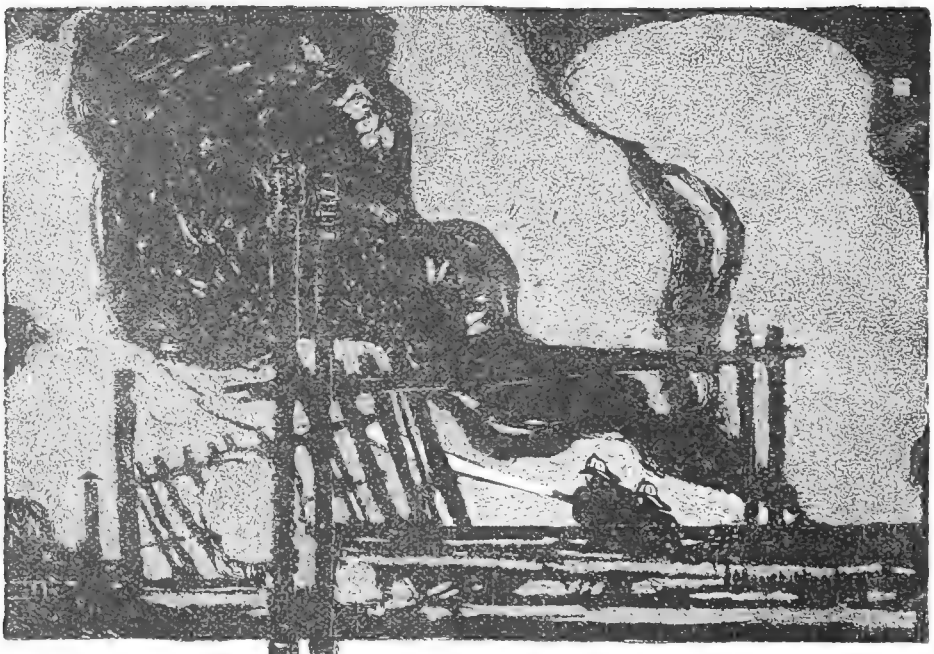

YELLOW CALLAHAN

by Carl M. Chapin

"I'VE been reading about 'Pre-Natal Influence'!" remarked the Old Chief as he put down his magazine and hoisted himself out of the leathern depths of his easy chair, his cavernous sigh softened somewhat by the tingling hand-clasp with which he greeted me.

In the days when my livelihood depended upon the pursuit and capture of Fire Department news items I used to find the stuffy headquarters of the —th District a pleasant and profitable hunting ground. And now that I have advanced to better things and my old friend has retired to round out a useful life in the comfortable worship of his fetich, "Education," I still find it well worth while to spend an occasional afternoon in his quiet, book-banked den. For the veteran is an inexhaustible reservoir of reminiscences, stored up through fifty years of warfare with an element more merciless and treacherous than Old Ocean itself.

Having reduced my bread-winning member to a state of prickling helplessness, the Chief departed in the direction of the refrigerator to perform the never-failing second rite in his ritual of welcome. From the rear regions of the bachelor apartments came rumbling back to me, in a voice acquired by years of competition with the roaring exhaust of his own fire-engines, the information:

"It's sort of a mental birthmark."

He wrestled in silence with the not yet familiar domestic equipment and reappeared, red in the face and puffing, bearing in one hand two tall glasses wherein cracked ice clinked enticingly; in the other a decanter of Scotch whisky and a bottle of carbonated water; from either arm-pit projected the cap of a beer-bottle. Still struggling with his breathing but mindful of the topic in hand he stood, encumbered as he was, by the table.

"This says," indicating the magazine by a sidewise twist of the head, "that a baby can have marks on its brain the same as on its body. Say its mother wants strawberries and it's Winter and she can't get 'em; when that baby's born it's born

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with a longing for strawberries and it always longs for 'em. Say she gets scared of the dark; the baby'll be afraid of the dark all its life. I read a story once about a woman whose husband had his legs broken under a horse and they had to be amputated. He died and she kept seeing those short stumps as they looked under the sheet when he lay in bed afterwards. When her baby was born his feet were where his knees ought to have been. Sometimes it's the body like that and sometimes it's the mind. Only this article here says you can't get rid of it any more than you can rub out a birthmark on the body; and I know that ain't true for I've seen it done. There's a fellow in this Department now—but which of these do you want?"

I scented a story and knowing from long experience that the sure way to slay an interesting reminiscence at its birth was to betray anxiety to hear it, and the certain method of extracting it to evince willingness to change the subject, I remarked casually:

"I don't see where the Police have got anything on the Fire Department when a District Chief can retire into plutocratic luxury like this."

The Chief displayed a certain amount of embarrassment, as always when taxed with his new-born fondness for the flesh-pots. But he dismissed the matter lightly, saying,

"It's cheap living in the Department if a man hasn't got a family to support. I've laid by a bit of money in forty-eight years and why shouldn't I spend some of it? And I haven't had to graft any of it, either, if that's what you mean," he added, and having disposed of my interruption, he got back to his mutton.

"But about this birthmark business, now; there's a man right in this Department to-day that used to be so scared of fire he cried. Yes sir, when he first came into the Department he'd go down on his knees and cry like a baby every time he saw a bit of blaze. He was marked that way—and he got over it."

"Who is it?" I asked.

"Jimmie Callahan," said the Chief with the pleased solemnity of one certain of creating a sensation. And he made no mistake.

"*Yellow Callahan?*" I gasped in unbelief.

"Yes, Yellow Callahan," mimicked the Chief and settled back in his chair, evidently enjoying the outward manifestations of the difficulty I experienced in assimilating this statement.

In fact, it was well-nigh impossible to connect Yellow Callahan, of all men, with such an episode. His promotion, at twenty-eight, to the rank of District Chief, which had been coincident with my old friend's retirement, was without a precedent in the Department's history. At that age, ordinarily, immediate ambition reaches no higher than the single trumpet of a lieutenancy. Yet, strange to say, there had been no muttering of the disappointed, and higher evidence of fitness than this no man may ask. In the eight years of his service no Annual Inspection had failed to find Yellow Callahan in that little squad of honor men lined up to receive the medals that signify, not that the recipients are the only brave men, but that their gallantry has been of a kind to stand out among the hundreds of brave deeds that go to make up the day's work of these modest fighters. I threw up my hands and the Chief fairly beamed upon me.

"You don't believe it," he chortled, "and I don't blame you. I wouldn't believe it myself if I hadn't seen it. You see his father was killed, blown off a ladder by a little puff out of a window. And his wife—they hadn't been married long—was there in the crowd. And I guess she never stopped thinking about that puff of fire, night or day, till Jimmie was born. Then she died; but she left that fear of the fire in him.

"I don't know what ever sent him into the Department with that on him—perhaps he didn't know. Anyhow, he came to me when I was Captain down on Truck 10 and I was glad to get him for his father's sake. He was a wonder on the ladders—like a monkey—and didn't act like he was afraid of anything. I went up to Headquarters once or twice and watched him working with the drill squad, and I tell you it turned me cold to see the things he'd do—and I used to be pretty fair on a scaling-ladder myself before I got fat and scary.

"Well, he looked mighty good to me till we got our first working fire—just a bit of a blaze in a stable. They had it black when we got there and we went to work on the sidewalk, opening up hay-bales. Some of

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'em had fire inside and when Jimmie ripped one up she flared up into his face. Well sir, he crumpled up like he'd been pole-axed! Went right down on his knees with his hands over his face. I thought maybe it had caught his eyes and I ran over and pulled his hands away. But it hadn't touched him; he was just blubbering like a baby.

"I didn't see through it then and I puzzled over it all the way home. Then I had a talk with the boy and, putting what he told me with what I knew, I made a good guess at it, though I'd never heard of 'pre-natal influence.' I tried to get him to quit, but he begged hard for another chance and I let it go at that, though I knew I'd no business to keep him.

"But that didn't let him out with the crew. They'll stand for a lot in the Department, but they won't stand for a quitter. They were after **him** before we got cleaned up that night. I had a senior then—the meanest man I ever worked with, and that's saying a lot. He was a good fireman, though, and he never shystered his work or got tangled up in the rules so I could break him. But he was everlastingly starting trouble. We'll say his name's Skelly, because I never knew a man of that name and anyhow you'd never recognize him now from the description. He and Jimmie learned their lesson together. Well, Skelly started after the boy as soon as we struck the house—maybe before, I don't know—and I could hear 'em at it before I went up-stairs. First I really heard was when Skelly sang out, after something Jimmie'd said to him,

"'Like ——! You're yellow inside. You're so —— yellow its leaking out your head!'

"That raised a big laugh and the name stuck to him."

"But——," I began.

"I know. You thought it was his hair. So does everybody that don't know. But that's the way he got the name and it's stuck. I think he's sort of proud of it now, but it pretty nearly drove him into the river then. I tell you, when they once start hazing a man in the Department his life's hell. You see, he can't get away from it. He's got to put in twenty-one hours with the gang every day, and even at night you can't be sure some cuss with a grouch or indigestion won't take it out on him because he can't sleep. And Jimmie certainly got it good; I don't know as I ever saw any worse deviling than that boy got, with Skelly at the bottom of it. The rest'd horse him without thinking much about what it meant—just to kill time and raise a laugh—but it was like the booze to Skelly. And he was pretty fond of that, too.

"I couldn't butt in. A captain can't be mixing into every scrap in the company. The men won't stand for it and a crew can send the old man on to the carpet at Headquarters pretty easy and pretty often, if they set about it. And it wouldn't have helped the boy any—he'd have got it worse than ever on the quiet. As it was, I'd made it harder for him by not reporting him or making him get out. It don't do a man any good to have the old man petting him. Pete Madden, he was Luff—Lieutenant, down on 10 then, helped the boy some, but I could see it was taking his nerve. You see, he knew they had it on him and he couldn't get back at 'em. So he kept getting worse and worse till he'd jump at the scratch of a match almost, and he quit cold every time we got in sight of a bit of blaze.

"I knew I'd got no business keeping him, but it's an awful thing to break a man for cowardice and I couldn't bring myself to do it—not to Tom Callahan's boy. I tried to persuade him to resign, but he wouldn't listen to it. I knew from that and the quiet way he'd talk to me that he wasn't a quitter, nor yellow. If he had been he'd never have stuck, with the men deviling him the way they were. It wasn't just the disgrace of it that was worrying him—I could see that. There was something behind it that he'd figured out, sitting alone by himself all day and most likely lying awake nights over it.

"He figured he'd got to beat it or it would beat him—he was making the fight of his life right there, and if he got licked he was licked for good. If I broke him he was licked anyway, without a chance to fight. And every time I saw him with his pale face and the rings under his eyes and his jaws set I couldn't help thinking how he'd look on one of those white slabs over at the morgue—with the water spattering on him. I was pretty —— sure that's where I'd see him next if I broke him—and I didn't break him.

"Pretty soon Bill Mullen—he was Chief

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in the District then—hauled me up about it."

The Chief sipped his highball and smiled with reminiscent enjoyment.

"I knew Bill pretty well and I gave it to him good and stiff. My nerves weren't much better than the boy's about then and Bill happened to be fooling around just when the safety-valve popped. Anyhow, he dropped me mighty quick. But the next fire we went to I had a telephone call from the Big Chief and I tell you I was pretty low when I bumped down to Headquarters on a car next morning. I knew I couldn't blaspheme him out of it the way I had Bill Mullen, and I figured it was all up with the boy.

"The Boss certainly gave me a good laying out. Said discipline in the District was all going to blazes and he didn't know what ailed me, playing favorites that way. I could see Bill Mullen had been at him and I could see he wasn't really so mad as he put on. There isn't a man who worked with old Tom Callahan that hasn't got a soft spot for him yet—and for his boy. Finally he cooled down a bit.

"'Now look here, Tom,' he says, 'what ails the boy?'

"Then I told him what I thought about it and how he was fighting it and what it would mean if I broke him. He chewed on that for quite a while and he was pretty sober over it, too. The Boss has got a pretty big old heart in him, only he's afraid some one'll see it. Finally he says:

"'I'd hate like —— to have Tom Callahan's boy go out that way, but I can't stand for this sort of thing. It'd put the Department on the bum in no time. If he does it again he's got to go—and if he won't resign, I'll break him! You tell him that.'

"And when I got back to the house I did tell him just that—and he never said a word.

"Next morning he started on his day off. When he came back for roll-call the next morning we'd just come in from our third working fire and no sleep—and we hadn't had time to change our clothes when we got a call from the lumber wharves. Jimmie went with us—and dropped inside of ten minutes. I tell you it turned me cold all over when I saw him go—thinking what it meant to him. I was afraid to send him home alone, knowing I'd never find him there, so I set him to watch the horses and I put the driver to work in his place.

"We didn't get home 'till after dark that night and we'd been at it altogether for thirty-odd hours with no sleep and not much to eat. We backed in and put the horses out and I told the crew to go to bed without cleaning up. I put Jimmie on floor-watch because he'd had a night's rest and I knew it would keep him safe till I could talk with him in the morning. I thought the men'd be tired enough to let him alone, but I told you Skelly would rather do some one dirt than sleep, any time. Well, I was sitting on the edge of my bed trying to pull off a boot that was half full of water and sticking like pitch and I was cursing fires and the whole Department from the Commissioner down, when I heard some one whistling on the stairs, like you whistle to a dog. Pretty soon one of the boys stuck his head out of the bunk room and says:

"'What you whistling for, Dan?'

"I could hear 'em giggling like a lot of girls in the bunk-room and then Skelly sings out, in that silky voice he'd put on when he wanted to be meaner'n usual:

"'Cap's left his little yellow dog down stairs and I'm feared he'll be afraid, alone in the dark.'

"At that there was a big laugh and in a minute I heard some one running up the stairs. I thought it was Skelly and I made up my mind as soon as I got that boot off I'd go in and give him a laying out he'd remember for a while. But before I got through thinking it you'd have thought hell was loose in that bunk-room. Somebody squealing like he was being stuck and the rest of 'em yelling and smashing around.

"One foot I couldn't step on—with that blasted boot—but I made that bunk-room in about six hops. Jimmie—it was him I'd heard coming upstairs—had Skelly on his back across a bed with both knees in his chest and was pinching his wind-pipe with one hand and pounding his face with the other. Skelly was bigger than two of the boy, but he was so far gone he couldn't move a finger. I thought the boy'd kill him before we could pry him loose.

"When we got 'em apart Skelly was a sight; his neck was all bleeding and his face looked like some one'd been petting him with an emery-wheel. He just lay there with his eyes bulging, trying to get his

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lungs working. We had to hold Jimmie—he was fighting crazy—while they sponged Skelly off and got him so's he could breathe and walk. And then the bell began to hit an alarm.

"Well, we were in fine shape to respond. The boys were half undressed and that's a lot worse than being in bed. Their clothes were soaking wet and scattered all over the room and they were so up in the air over the fight they couldn't find anything. It's funny, but every time I think of that night—and I never had one to beat it in my life—the first thing I think of is that boot. My foot was swelled up with being wet all day so I couldn't get the thing on or off and I just stood there pulling and swearing while the boys ran around like a lot of crazy hens. It was worse than getting caught with the whole crew in the bath-tub.

"Jimmie had left the day 'trip' on the stall doors and that let the horses out on the first stroke of the bell. There wasn't any one down there to harness and by the time we got downstairs they were all over the place. It's lucky that box didn't touch us till the third alarm. If it had been in our district they'd have had the insurance adjusted and a fire sale open before we got there. As it was, we hadn't more than rounded up the horses under the harness when the third came in, right on top of the first, without any second between. And we started—about as likely a crew of candidates for the psychopathic ward as ever rolled to a fire."

The Chief rekindled his cigar and puffed reflectively.

"That's the biggest night I ever remember, take it all together," he went on. "And it does make me mad every time I think of that boot. I didn't get it on till we rolled in to the fire and maybe if I hadn't had to stop for it then a lot of things wouldn't have happened. You remember the Armstrong fire down in Alston Street? That was only eight years ago—probably you were old enough to read the papers," he added maliciously, ever ready for a dig at my youth and inexperience.

"I remember reading about it," I replied with dignity.

"It's about the worst that ever hit this Department and I'm thinking it mightn't have been so bad if the whole gang, Chief and all, hadn't been so drunk for sleep. When we rolled in I sent Madden with the crew to report and sat down on the running-board to settle with that boot. I thought I'd catch up with them, but I didn't. By the time I got ship-shape they'd all gone into the building. That's the last I ever saw of some of those boys," he added soberly and smoked in silence for a time.

"Did you ever see that Armstrong block?" he resumed. "Well, it was a six-story barracks about a hundred feet on Alston Street with two-story shacks on each end. It was certainly built for a bonfire, with stairs running up around a big well in the middle. Some of the floors were all open and some of 'em were cut up into little rooms and the whole place was jammed full of machinery and boxes and bales of stuff so you couldn't hardly move in it. I guess there was every kind of business in the world, from shoeing horses to printing books in that building. Out in back there was a narrow yard that you couldn't get into nor out of except through the building that backed in from French Street.

"When we got there the fire was all in the fourth and fifth floors at the north end and it looked like we'd stop it there. We had her pretty well out and the boys were scattered all through, washing down and chasing her out of the partitions, when the whole north end of the sixth floor came down without a word of warning. You see, the pillars weren't protected and the water going in on 'em when they were red hot twisted 'em all up. There was a lot of heavy presses on the sixth and they went clean through, as far as they could go. It cut the building right in two down through that well so the upper half of every flight of stairs was left hanging. The débris, as you fellows call it, was piled up from the basement to the third-floor windows and it caught fire like kindling-wood, what with the broken gas-pipes and all.

"I was in on the south side of the third, near enough to get a wipe in the side from a scantling that put me out for a minute or two. When I came to, she was roaring up through that pile of stuff like a blast furnace. I ran across a couple of boys from an engine company and we streaked it out a back window and down a thirty-foot ladder——"

"Yes," I said, "I read of *that* in the papers, too."

"Huh," was the Chief's only comment.

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For this was one of the stories I had never been able to wring from him. It concerned a man with a crushed side who pulled two crippled comrades from a mass of blazing débris, and with shattered ribs tearing the flesh at every step, dragged them, one at a time, through choking smoke and a maze of machinery to a window and thence, with infinite suffering, down a ladder to the ground. And this man sat there and said, "Huh!"

"Huh," said the Chief, impatiently, "I'm trying to tell you about Jimmie Callahan. It seems Madden was up on the sixth floor with Jimmie and Skelly and a couple of greenhorns—a pair of scrubs that somebody'd swept up in the gutter and dumped in on me. I don't know what their names were but they were a couple of pie-faced cigarette eaters and I had 'em picked for slaughter just as soon as I could get anything on 'em. Didn't have guts enough between 'em to make one first-class Headquarters clerk. It seems as though the Lord might have let *them* go down with those floors and saved some of the good men that did go.

"But he didn't. When the floors went Madden went with 'em—they found his badge and a bunch of keys with his name on when they dug the place out later. Something hit Skelly and knocked him down on to the landing where the stairs turned—they were all gone below that. When he came to he lay there with his feet hanging over the edge and a big beam across his middle—I guess that's all that saved him from going down. He told me afterwards he could see Jimmie and the two scrubs up over his head hanging on to the railing and staring down at him and he never saw such faces in his life, with their eyeballs popping and their mouths stretched out in a kind of a grin. He says they certainly didn't look human with the glare of the fire on 'em.

"Skelly says it was right there he saw a lot of things he'd never thought of before. It's funny how much a man can think of in a couple of minutes like that. He knew he couldn't expect much help from those kids and he couldn't see anything of Madden, so he made up his mind he'd got to go before very long. Every time he made a move to help himself the landing would sag lower and he'd slip farther over the edge. He says he could feel that edge climbing up the backs of his legs and the fire burning the boots off his feet. You ought to see him sweat when he tells it!

"Finally he was over almost to his waist and all that held him was that beam up under his armpits. It was anchored at the ends somehow, and it saved him from going over, but the landing was tilted so he couldn't see the kids up over his head and he was looking right down into the fire. He said it looked like hell—and I guess he wasn't swearing when he said it, either.

"The smoke and the pain in his feet—he didn't walk for most a year after that—were making him pretty faint, I guess. He says he can just remember feeling the landing begin to shake and sag like it was going for good and then some one grabbed him by the coat and began to pull him back. He had just time to think Madden had come after him and then he passed away. It was more than a month before they told him it was Jimmie Callahan crawled down those stairs and out on to that rickety landing and got him. The wonder is it didn't go down with the two of them.

"It must have been about that time we were getting out into the back yard and when we hit the ground we were all too far gone to go any farther. I remember I sat down with my back against a pile of cinders and it felt like a feather bed. So I just sat there, watching the fire eat through. Up at the south end—that was to my right—there wasn't any blaze, but the north end was burning like a bonfire and she was traveling through pretty lively.

"The window we'd come out of—where the thirty-foot ladder was—was five or six windows from the south corner on the third floor. Two windows from that, toward the fire, there was a scaling-ladder hanging and I remember wondering what had become of the poor devil that put it there. It was hooked into a window on the fifth floor and the lower end hung opposite the fourth. There was fire in the window on the fifth, but the one under it was piled with boxes or something so if there was any fire in that room it didn't show from outside. I'm telling you this so you'll get this thing straight.

"I sat there kind of half asleep with the pain in my side and wondering whether anybody would find us before the wall came down—though I don't remember caring a whole lot either way just then. You see

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what few hadn't been caught inside were pretty busy around in front trying to get the boys out of that blazing mess at the north end. Anybody that had life enough left to move alone had to shift for himself.

"Well, all of a sudden I saw two or three heads up on the sixth floor, right over the ladder we'd come out on. They were lowering a piece of hose and I figured they were going to come down on it to the third floor and strike that ladder. But when they stopped paying out it only reached to the fourth and I could see that was all they had. Well they rubbered and talked for a while and finally one of 'em took off his coat and laid it over the window-ledge so the stone wouldn't saw the hose. Then he backed out the window and commenced to slide down. It looked like a fool game to me and it made me mad, too, for I figured when he reached the end and dropped he'd hit on that ladder and bound right into my lap. I tried to yell to him, but I couldn't even whisper and I couldn't move a muscle, so I had to sit there and wait.

"He came down slow, hand over hand with a bight of hose around one leg, till he got to the end. I shut my eyes then, good and tight; but there didn't seem to be anything happening so I took a peek. Well, sir, he was just digging his toes into the bricks—he didn't have any boots on—and swinging himself back and forth like a pendulum, going wider every time.

"Then I saw what he was up to—he was going after that scaling ladder, two windows over to his left. I thought he'd never get it. Twice he hit it with his foot but couldn't hang on, and then he'd have to travel all the way over and all the way back and it seemed like his arms would be jerked out of the sockets. Finally he hooked it with one foot and swung there for a minute till it steadied down. He got that foot on to a step and then the other and after a while let go the hose with one hand and grabbed the ladder!

"I'd forgotten all about my side by that time—I've paid good money to see things that couldn't hold a candle to that. When he got on to that ladder he kind of let his head fall over against it like he was all in, and it knocked his hat off. Well, you've probably guessed who it was, but when I saw Jimmie Callahan's phiz up there I felt as though my heart was beating the roof off my brains. He hung there for a minute, hugging the ladder, with his face against his arm.

"Then the bunch he'd left up in the sixth began to tune up—I didn't know who they were then, but I might have guessed by the way they yelled bloody murder and help. They'd dropped the hose as soon as he let go of it—God knows how he ever hammered 'em into holding it or why he was fool enough to trust 'em to hang on. Anyhow, I guess they thought he was going to leave 'em, and he could have easy enough, for there wasn't any fire under him. But he isn't built that way. He just looked up and waved his arm to let 'em know he was coming and then he got busy.

"He couldn't go straight up, for the window above him, where the hook of the ladder was, was shooting fire and smoke so he couldn't have lived there. Over on his left, toward the north end, everything was blazing. The window on his right was red where the fire'd eaten into the room since he swung past it on the hose. I'd seen him drop for a lot less fire than there was inside that window, and I figured he'd got to give it up and come straight down. If he'd done that, those scrubs and Skelly'd been dead up there before he could have moved over and climbed up to 'em again.

"You see, I thought I knew all about him, and that's where I learned something. He leaned out from the ladder and took a look around at that window. Then he got in astride the sill, unhooked his ladder from the ledge up above him and let her slide along the wall till he could jam her through the next window on the fifth floor there. He kind of took a deep breath, stepped on to his ladder and let her swing. In a minute he was looking through that next window into as hot an old blaze as a man can look at and live.

"It was a toss-up with me whether he'd come down head first or feet first. But he didn't drop. He just hung to that ladder, while it swung back and forth, and stared into that window—looking it right in the eye. I didn't know it then, but I guess I was watching about the finest fight I'll ever see. And he beat it, just as he'd said he would, though it came out on him so hot his hair was frizzling!

"Well, when that ladder stopped swinging he went in astride that sill, as cool as though he'd been up in the drill-yard, and slipped his hook along to the next window.

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When he got back on the ladder his clothes were burning and he had to let go with one hand and beat 'em out. But when he made the window he was away from the fire and right where he'd started from, under the window where these kids were waiting for him. I guess that was the first breath I'd taken for five minutes.

"It was clear sailing after that, though he climbed like a tired man and there wasn't much time to waste, either. The smoke was beginning to show red up where those scrubs were waiting and they were screeching like crazy men. When he poked the hook of that ladder in amongst 'em they fought for it so I thought they'd be down on him neck and neck. But he got up there and drove 'em away and climbed in. He's told me he had to hold one of 'em while the other climbed down and into the window on the fifth. Then he sent the second one down and the two of them tried to take the ladder away. But he yanked it out of their hands and beat 'em with the end till they got back from the window. Then he slung Skelly over his shoulder and came down.

"And it was just like that all the way, those two pups fighting with each other to see who'd go first and then trying to get the ladder away before he had a chance to get down with Skelly. When they struck the top of that thirty-foot ladder at the third floor the window in the sixth where they'd started was full of fire and the fourth and fifth were getting pretty hot. There was a gang working in from French Street about that time and they were waiting for Jimmie and his bunch at the top of the thirty-footer. And I guess we were all pretty near ready for help—though I hadn't been thinking much about myself the last few minutes.

"Somehow I was standing on my feet when they landed and I'll never forget how that boy looked when they threw a lantern on him. The blood was running off his hands in streams—from the bricks and glass—and his face was black as a nigger's, with big, raw, pink spots where it had blistered and peeled off. Even his lips were burned black. When he saw me he just grinned—I hope to God I'll never see *that* again!—and he stretched out those bleeding hands of his and came staggering over. I know what he had on his mind and I know he wasn't thinking of the burns or the cuts or anything like that. But he didn't get a chance to say it then. He fell on my neck, as the saying is, and I wasn't up to the job. We both went down on that pile of cinders and I woke up in a nice white cot and a straight-jacket.

"When I saw Jimmie all there was to see of him was one eye and a mouth—the rest of him was bandages. You know what his face looks like now? Well, he was a pretty good looking kid before that night. Those marks won't come out, but he don't care—he got the other one out and that's all he wants!"

We were still smoking in silence when there wailed in to us the distant cry of a motor-car siren. The chief jumped to the window and I followed. Far down the street came tearing toward us a red Department automobile, its brass work flashing in the level rays of the sun. The driver bent to his work, hunched over the steering-wheel. Beside him a figure in white stooped on one knee and ground the crank of the siren ceaselessly. As the car bounced over the tracks and through the halted traffic of the nearest cross street this figure straightened up, raised the white hat and waved it to the old Chief. I caught a glimpse of a shock of yellow hair and a row of gleaming teeth as they swept by. Then the hat was jammed back and the figure bent again to its task.

The Chief cleared his throat huskily and his eyes were very bright.

"There he goes, hell-bent as usual," he said. "I certainly do think a lot of that homely little tyke."

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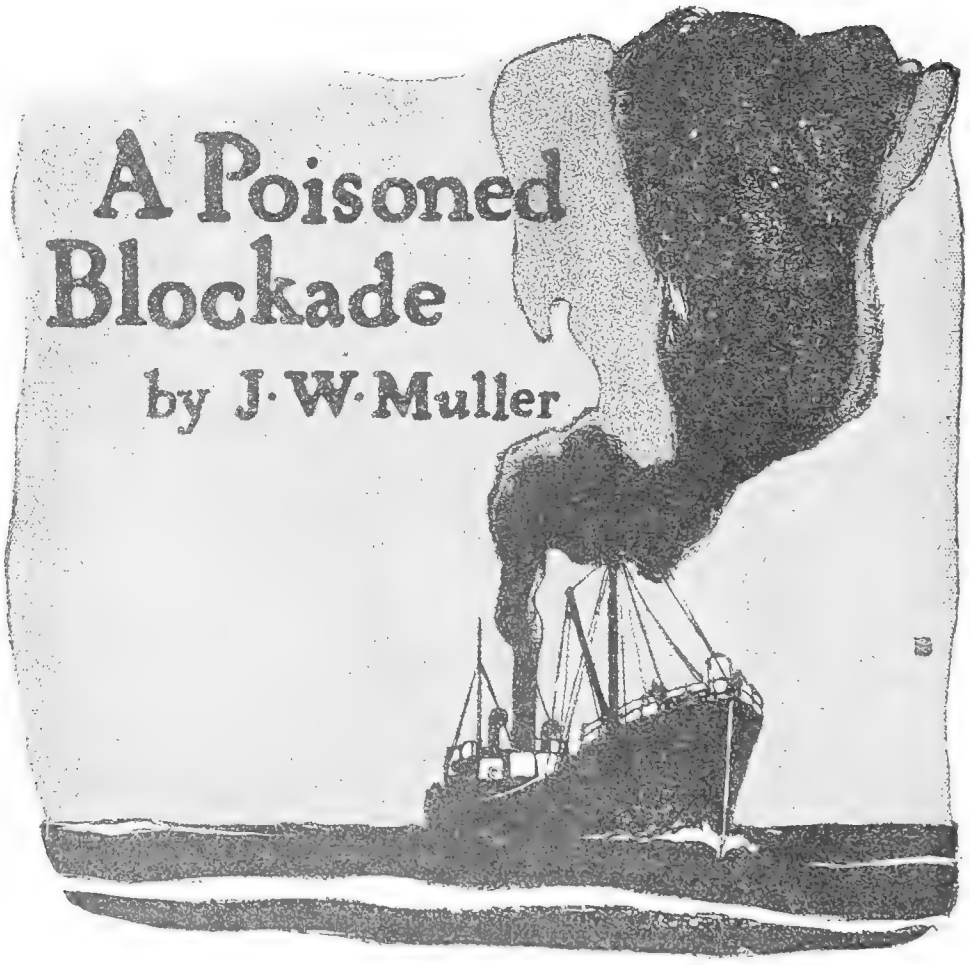
A Poisoned Blockade

by J. W. Muller



MR. HIRAM BUNKER was a devoted collector and, by years of complete surrender to his fad, he had become the leading virtuoso in his field. He collected only one thing. It was money. At times he dreamed that ultimately he would possess the only important collection of currency in the country.

Mr. Bunker was the last descendant of a long line of the well-known and unpopular poor but honest ancestors. He lived down the family failing so successfully that soon the entire legacy of poverty was transferred to his fellow-citizens, while the hereditary curse of honesty lay in vaults exchanged for stocks and bonds.

Early in life he perceived that the simple principle underlying all systems of finance was the principle of subtraction. From that discovery it was only a step for a logical mind to realize that the common mass of people are born to be minuends, while persons of genius are born to be subtrahends. He became a subtrahend. That great labor-saving utility, the stock-certificate, enabled him to do the greatest possible amount of subtraction in the shortest possible time.

He began modestly with a single-screw iron steamship, *Hiram Bunker*, built in the dark ages by his grandfather and used by that ingenuous gentleman to earn a laborious living. The present Mr. Bunker remained ashore and formed the *Hiram Bunker* into a stock company. As soon as possible he formed another stock company which bought the first one at the not extravagant expense of printing new stock-certificates. After allowing a decent but not undue interval for mourning, he formed a third

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company that bought the previous one. Thus, in course of time, more than a dozen great corporations sprang into tropical vigor from the original and humble germ, the *Hiram Bunker*.

Mr. Bunker kept none of the stock. He surrendered it freely to grasping investors who kept their shares ever afterward, less for their intrinsic worth than on account of the sentimental associations connected with them.

In the somewhat involved course of these affairs Mr. Bunker got the *Hiram Bunker* back into his sole possession. Having thus solved the great problem that has vexed the world so long, of how to eat one's cake and have it too, he continued the process with other ships without going through the empty formality of first owning them. At the age of forty-five he became the Steamship King, and all that he had lost in the process was his hair and temper.

In America industrial kings are royal only in finance. Otherwise they are like the king in a euchre-deck. Mr. Bunker, ambitious for social rank, looked for a wedge. He married Miss Elsie Vanderloot, who was so well inside of the sacred inclosure of aristocracy that her name appeared regularly among those present. Miss Vanderloot's family had ceased three generations ago to do anything except draw interest, and her kin looked haughtily at the brand-new Steamship King, but an unfortunate investment by the elder sister in a Servian Prince caused so active a demand for money that they consented gloomily.

The great alliance spurred Mr. Hiram Bunker to greater ideals than ever. He made so much money that several millions of his fellow-citizens ceased entirely to worry about their own affairs and spent their whole time worrying about his.

Mrs. Bunker's share of the labors was to spend the money intelligently enough to take the Bunkers out of the "among those present" class. It was slow work.

The tedium of the social campaign irritated Mr. Bunker, who was accustomed to do things so fast that the penal code had long since lost all hope of catching up. He spoke seriously to Mrs. Bunker.

Mrs. Bunker wept slightly and fell back on the *Hiram Bunker*. It was trumps. The *Hiram Bunker* was the pet topic of the newspapers. Whenever Mr. Bunker engaged in a new feat of subtraction, or Mrs. Bunker spent the result, the picture of the battered *Hiram Bunker* was immorally certain to appear with a few enthusiastic remarks about Mr. Bunker's original ideas on finance. "It's simply hopeless," said she, "to expect to be anything or to rise to anything so long as that hideous old monster is afloat with your family name on it. I want you to destroy it, blot it out! It's good for nothing, anyway!"

Mr. Bunker promised the fair but unfinancial female that he would put the *Hiram Bunker* away—a pleasing but vague assurance. Though he agreed that from a nautical point of view the ship was good for nothing, to his large, reasoning mind it was still extremely good for something; that is, to sell.

All he needed was a buyer. A business man of the good old slip-shod days would have offered the ship for sale. Mr. Bunker, being of the good new times, used the modern method of picking his man and then selling him that which it was decreed he must buy.

II

THE person cast by Mr. Bunker for this purely passive rôle of buyer was made by nature for the part as Mr. Bunker was made by nature to sell. He was Captain Julius Moses, master of one of the various hundreds of ships owned by the Steamship King. Captain Moses was small, with a face so mild that strangers who met him suddenly invariably stopped, thinking that he was about to apologize for something.

The Captain was one of that great and immensely beneficent class of men who are irresistibly drawn by a poor bargain. When he emerged from Mr. Bunker's office he had bound himself to pay down $5,000 and give the Steamship King a mortgage for $10,000.

Captain Moses blinked when he got into the sunshine. He stroked his timid little beard. His heart was heavy. But then he thought of Mr. Bunker's promise to make the *Hiram Bunker* as good as new before he turned her over to the new owner. It cheered him up wonderfully.

However, he had only $3,000, and this, with the $500 in cash that he had just laid down before Mr. Bunker under the fascinating gleam of that gentleman's eye, left $1,500 still to be found. Captain Moses

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sought out his Mate and life-long friend, Mr. William Bowsun.

Mr. Bowsun listened so coldly that Captain Moses, in self-defense, became convinced that the *Hiram Bunker* was a prize. "You put in that one thousand dollars you've saved, Bill," declared the Captain impressively, "and we'll double it in six months."

Bill Bowsun shook his head. "A thousand dollars," said he, firmly, "is a thousand dollars."

The strength of his argument staggered the little Captain. "Well," said he desperately, "then I s'pose I'll have to lose the $500 that I paid down to bind the bargain."

Mr. Bowsun was a born prey to the great vice of gratitude. Captain Moses had towed him many years. The Captain's own advance had been phenomenally slow; but so far as one snail can help another, Julius Moses had helped William Bowsun faithfully. With a sigh the Mate undid his belt and extracted from a canvas treasure-house a tightly creased package of ancient bills.

"Now we only need $500 more," said Captain Moses. "I'm thinking we'll let Henry in on this. It'll be just the chance to invest the money we've saved for him out of his wages—give him a real start, you know."

The Mate shrugged his shoulders. "Nothin' will ever give that boy a start till he stops readin' them books about pirates and such," he remarked pessimistically. "But you might as well let him in. Only don't ask him first. He's perwerse, that's what he is, perwerse."

Henry was the nephew of Captain Moses, and between him and Mr. Bowsun there existed a mutual enmity engendered by a mutual distrust of each other's mental qualities.

Captain Moses fingered his beard irresolutely. "I guess we'd better speak to him," said he.

In answer to his summons there appeared a small, pudgy, pastry-fed boy, who surveyed his elders with a cold, flat eye while Captain Moses hurriedly laid the case before him. He asked questions that seemed to Mr. Bowsun so unnecessary and uncalled for that he could not refrain from remarking so.

"It's my money, Bill—I mean Mr. Mate," said Henry, with freezing dignity.

"Your'n?" repeated Mr. Bowsun, amazed. "*Your'n?* When we saved it for you so's you wouldn't waste it? And now you up and call it your'n!"

"Well," said Henry magnanimously, "I don't mind buyin' a part of a ship with it, anyway."

"No, you don't!" interposed Mr. Bowsun. "You don't become part owner of nothin'. Captain here, he stays Captain. And me, Mr. Bowsun, I stay Mate. And you stay Steward—Cabin-boy is what I calls it. And that there money what we saved for you goes into the ship same as a bank, only you can't draw it out."

"It's a good investment for you, Henry," said the Captain, stroking his little beard. "So we'll call it settled," he concluded hastily and fled.

"The trouble with you is, Henery," said the Mate, "that you presume. You presume, that's what you do. We can't never dare to be kind to you and ask you whether you'd like to do a thing or not, because you're always likely to say that you don't want to do it."

"Then why do you ask me?" demanded Henry, prudently getting out of reach of Mr. Bowsun's mammoth hand.

"Why?" repeated the mate. "Why?" He pondered. Then a triumphant light came into his face. "Why, out of humanity, o' course," said he. "And now you get back to work or I'll be inhuman."

III

ON THE way to Mr. Bunker's office next day, Captain Moses and Mr. Bowsun instructed each other elaborately as to the clauses that must be put into the contracts. "Read 'em over careful, Cap'n, and take partic'lar note of them little periods and commars and such. I heard tell about how one of them things'll change the sense of most anything, accordin' to where it's put," said Mr. Bowsun earnestly.

"Leave me alone to look after that," pronounced Captain Moses with unusual determination. "I'll see that everything's as straight as the Channel."

When Mr. Bunker, however, laid down before them a little hill of long sheets with impressive headings printed across the tops and crowded with innumerable lines of fine print, the weird ravings that lawyers consider language made the Captain's head swim before he had succeeded in toiling through more than ten lines of whereases

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and hereintofores, hereinafters and parties of the first and second parts. Mr. Bowsun, after one dazed look, sank into stupor and returned no reply to his friend's whispered queries except to shake his head slowly and wave a huge hand.

At first Captain Moses read with such desperate application that his eyes became painfully rigid and he half imagined that they creaked whenever he turned from the end of one line to the beginning of another. Then came a period of mild lunacy, during which he read without the slightest attempt to understand. And after that followed a complete blank from which he awoke to find himself reaching for the pen. For an instant a wild idea came to him to read the documents again. But he knew that it would be useless. He signed and pushed the papers to Mr. Bowsun, who signed with the same helpless resignation.

Not until they were outside again, with a bundle of documents replacing the bundle of money with which they had entered, did they struggle back to sanity once more. Then Bill Bowsun said: "He plumb forgot to say anything to us about making that there ship seaworthy!"

Captain Moses looked at Bill Bowsun and Bill Bowsun looked at Captain Moses. Without a word they turned and reentered the office. Mr. Bunker heard them with a philanthropic smile. "You read all the papers before you signed, you know," said he genially. "Everything that we agreed on is in them. The bargain's closed."

"I didn't read the papers very careful," said Mr. Bowsun. "Not what you might call very careful. What is there in 'em about makin' repairs?"

"Not a word," replied Mr. Bunker, getting up and shaking Mr. Bowsun's hand heartily. "Not a word."

He stepped backward and disappeared neatly through another door, leaving Captain Moses and Mr. Bowsun to look fixedly at each other.

"We must never tell Henery about this," meditated Mr. Bowsun aloud when they were on the street again. "He'd be sure to presume. And yet, it would do that boy good to see what harm print can do to a man's brains. I can feel my head go around yet from tryin' to read them things. It's the fust time I tried to do much what you could really call readin' since I read a almanac what I bought once. I read it for nigh on to three months and got it all by heart, and then didn't I find out that it was a almanac of the year before, and all I had learned out of it was clean wasted! It made trouble for me a good long while, that there almanac did. I learn things so they last; and some of them dates had got that fixed inside o' me that they wouldn't come loose. It kept me awake many a night in my bunk frettin' for fear that I'd have to go through all the rest o' my life full of wrong dates. Well, sir, I ain't never read anything since, and what's the result? My mind's as strong as ever it was."

Captain Moses sighed.

IV

HE SIGHED again next day when he surveyed the *Hiram Bunker* and listened to the vivid and delighted description by her Engineer of what she needed to be made ready for sea. The Engineer not only had the same gloomy professional pride that fires a doctor when he describes dreadful symptoms, but he was afflicted also with the gloomy sense of humor peculiar to men who deal extensively with such practical jokers as marine engines.

They were two attributes not conducive to the peace of mind of the owners of the *Hiram Bunker*. The two held a long council, to which Mr. Bowsun, in a flash of inspiration, contributed the hopeful suggestion that they punch the Engineer's head the next time he demanded something. On consideration, however, it seemed only too evident that, pleasant though it would be, it would not noticeably prepare the *Hiram Bunker* for sea.

With another series of sighs Captain Moses sallied forth and mortgaged the little home farm. It was a farm that had kept the Moses family poor through generations, but every Moses was richly dowered with hopes, and Captain Moses, like his ancestors, had paid taxes and other expenses year by year, intending, like all his forbears, to "make something out of the place" some day.

The mortgage money poured into the greasy engine-pit with saddening velocity. Captain Moses signed checks till he shuddered at the mere sight of anything that reminded him of ink.

At last, however, the humorist of the engine-room protruded a remarkably dirty

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countenance from his pit and reported that the *Bunker* was ready for sea.

To Mr. Bowsun the Engineer unbent sufficiently to remark: "Only technically speaking, you mind. Technically speaking, she's ready for sea; but morally speaking, morally, she's just about ready to retire to an old lady's home."

"I've seen worse ships," replied Mr. Bowsun with dignity.

"In a diving-suit?" inquired the Engineer with every appearance of eager interest.

Mr. Bowsun walked away and spoke sternly to Henry.

V

A FEW days later, Captain Moses, stroking his beard nervously, confided to Mr. Bowsun that freights were very scarce. "Well," said Mr. Bowsun with a far-away expression, "mebbe it's because shippers generally mean for their freights to go to reg'lar ports."

"What d'ye mean?" demanded the Captain.

"I mean," said Mr. Bowsun pessimistically, "that to any shipper that has middlin' good eyesight this here—wessel, let's call her—must look as if the only port she'd make would be the kind that map-makers don't mark on charts because it wouldn't seem dellykit to masters."

The Capain gazed reprovingly at Mr. Bowsun. In the next few days their relations were polite but not gushing—a situation which was not improved by the Mate's unnecessary conscientiousness about log entries. Each day he wrote ceremoniously: "Still tide up at warf. Frates scares. So ends this day."

It was a relief to Captain and Mate when at last Mr. Bowsun was able to vary his literary work by logging: "Left warf. Proceeded to bay and ankered. Frates scares. So ends this day."

A few days afterward Captain Moses called Mr. Bowsun aside. "We've got a cargo, Bill," said he. "Leastways, we can have it if we want it."

He paused, and Bill Bowsun encouraged him: "O' course we want it."

Captain Moses fingered his beard dubiously. "Why, I don't know," he said. "You see, Bill, it's a special kind of cargo. Very special. The fact is, it's fertilizer."

"Well," replied Mr. Bowsun, thoughtfully, "half a loaf is better'n no bread at all, even if it's only fertilizer."

"Yes, but," said Captain Moses desperately, "this is a very special kind of fertilizer. Very special it is. Not to deceive you, Bill," and he took hold of the Mate's coat-button, "it's a new kind of fertilizer that was invented by a man who owns a farm down the coast, and he invented it strong. The fact is, he invented it so strong that he ain't been able to find a ship to carry it. And now the concern that mixed it for him they're threatening him to sue him or to have him indicted by the Board of Health if he don't take it away quick."

"Half a loaf——" began Mr. Bowsun. Then it struck him that the simile was unfortunate. He scratched his head. "How far we got to take it?"

"Only about two hundred miles up the coast," answered Captain Moses. "No, not even as far as that." His face cheered. "It's only a hundred and eighty-odd miles. And," added he hopefully, "maybe we'll have the luck to get a good breeze."

"Mebbe," said Mr. Bowsun with instant pessimism, "but likely not. I never yet see the wind blow the way it's needed, and I don't know what inflooence fertilizer could have on it 'ceptin' for the worse. Howsumever, we'd better take anything that'll get this tea-kittle under way. If she gathers any barnacles I'm afearing they might bite clean through her, some o' her plates is that thin."

Captain Moses ignored the sarcasm and retreated ashore to arrange for the cargo.

An hour or so later the crew of the *Hiram Bunker* betrayed strange uneasiness. The Engineer and his Assistant came hurriedly from below and sniffed the air anxiously. Then they looked expectantly over-side. Seeing nothing there, the chief turned to the Cook and asked suspiciously: "You don't expect us to eat that, I hope!"

"Eat what?" demanded the Cook.

"What we're smelling!" explained the Engineer rudely.

The Cook desisted momentarily from sniffing the laden air and gazed at the Engineer with all the passionate anger of a fine spirit sorely wounded. Then he sniffed once more and, stricken speechless, held up his hands.

Meantime Henry approached the Mate with a wrinkled nose. "Bi—leastways Mr.

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Mate, I mean," said he, "don't you notice that the air is full o' something? It's gittin' fuller every minute, too."

"Henery," responded the Mate, "you unwrinkle your nose before you speak to me! It's disrespectful. And you just keep your remarks in your chist where they come from. This here what the air is full of is in them lighters comin' down with the tide, and it's our cargo."

"Cargo!" howled the Engineer at the Mate when the lighters came alongside. He held his nose and spoke in muffled tones. "*Cargo*! Look here! I signed on in a ship and not in a blamed cologne-factory! Don't you try to tell me it's fertilizer! It's some trust that's tryin' to corner all the bad smells in the world, and they done it!"

Henry laughed coarsely. The Mate, who was staring fixedly at the Engineer in the hope of conceiving a fitting reply to that gentleman's sarcasm, turned and said: "Henery, stop makin' them 'orrible noises. If your manners gits much worse, we'll have to send you down into the ingyne-room where they won't be so noticeable." He strode away majestically.

The wind was gentle and helpless against the fertilizer when the lighters dumped the last bagful into the *Hiram Bunker's* hold and that asthmatic vessel waddled down the channel. Captain Moses and Mr. Bowsun, standing on the bridge, were wreathed about with odors, and the acuteness of their feelings was not assuaged by the fact that vessels anchored far away on either side of the fair-way became populous with persons whose faces all bore the same expression as the ship approached—an expression of horrified surprise changing into one of still more horrified realization.

When the pilot prepared to go over-side after the *Hiram Bunker* had heaved herself over the rollers on the bar, he said with undisguised sympathy: "I was never so glad to get off a ship before. If you have any last messages to send to survivin' mourners, I'll be glad to take 'em ashore. It's the least one 'uman being can do for another."

VI

THE wind fulfilled Bill Bowsun's dark prophecy. It was dead astern and its speed was almost exactly that of the ship. This wise provision of an ever-thoughtful nature produced a dead calm around the *Hiram Bunker* and gave her crew a magnificent opportunity to become acquainted with the full merit of their cargo.

The *Hiram Bunker* was a fine, simple nautical model of the days when ships were built by the mile and cut apart in lengths to suit demands. It required intuition rather than technical knowledge to distinguish her bow from her stern when she was not under way. When she was under way her bow was usually in front, except now and then when a wave slewed her around a bit.

A smart sea began to run before the *Bunker* had gone many miles. The ship shuddered. She rolled. She pitched. An unduly analytical person, standing on deck and feeling the motion under him, might have said that she was writhing.

"Now if this here ship," said the Engineer admiringly, as he watched his engines, "went ahead nigh as fast as she pitches and rolls, wouldn't she be goin'? Just wouldn't she, though?"

"But as she is, she isn't," answered the Assistant cryptically. He held a wad of grease-soaked cotton-waste to his nose and drew a long breath, sighing: "My, but ain't it good to get a smell o' fresh air!"

The chief jumped at the engines. "If she races like that again," he grunted, "she'll be out of business."

The derisive engines raced again, and the *Hiram Bunker* did not go out of business. That is, not altogether. The engines merely jangled more than usual. Decidedly encouraged, the ship climbed a surge and fell headlong down the slope. Then she lurched, in excellent imitation of a fat man tripping. A wave fell away from under her. The beating propeller whirled, roared hideously as it hit air instead of solid water, something slatted in the engine-pit, and the Engineer fell on his machinery with both hands and wrestled with it.

The clatter stopped as the mass came to rest. "That came near taking all the studs out of our shirt," he wailed. "Go on deck with my compliments and tell the skipper of this here garbage-plant that he'd better run slow for the nearest harbor so's I can get out my house-wife and sew her up again."

The message, diplomatically interpreted by the Assistant, brought Captain Moses himself to the engine-room. He pulled his little beard and listened with strained intelligence to the Engineer's enthusiastic

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diagnosis. When he retired to the deck again he had a confused impression that the *Hiram Bunker* was suffering from a cracked piston complicated with gastritis.

"We'd better steer right for Pine Harbor," said he to Mr. Bowsun. "According to the chart there's an anchorage inside there about a mile from the entrance."

Mr. Bowsun nodded and signaled to go ahead. A mourning whimper arose from the engines. Slowly the *Hiram Bunker* swung toward the coast and reeled for harbor.

VII

"THERE'S a ship coming in," said somebody in a crowd of people on the veranda of a great Queen Anne-Colonial-Tudor-Renaissance country house that looked on a broad lawn sloping to the harbor's edge.

It was the first noticeable remark that had occurred in that crowd since dinner. They were all of the very best and almost best society, in which conversation long ago has been reduced from its pretended rank as an art to its proper place as a vulgar utility. Besides, in such very best modern society it was impossible to find a safe topic. Even that once entirely neutral topic, the weather, had to be avoided there, because the richest lady had an indelible great-grandfather in her pedigree who had mended umbrellas on the public highway. Music could not well be discussed in a circle where there was at least one painful ancestor who had made professional tours of the land with a barrel-organ. A mention of art would have annoyed another leader of society who had once painted heated proclamations on rocks, barns and other natural scenery, imploring mankind to eat a certain kind of pill.

The company gazed with polite indifference at the red and green lights that glided up the dark channel. But suddenly the polite indifference changed to an air of suppressed surprise. The lights came closer, and the suppressed surprise became unsuppressed.

Then conversation became wonderfully unrestrained on the veranda, though it consisted mostly of ejaculations. Lace handkerchiefs, sadly inadequate for the crisis, were at every feminine nose, and male noses sniffed in wrinkled horror.

The ship came in still closer, wreathed herself with escaping steam, and her anchor-chain roared out.

The night was warm, but in fifteen minutes every door and window in the great house was closed and sealed. In twenty minutes the servants were boarding up the fireplaces in frantic effort to barricade against the fragrance.

A furious man, choking, spluttering and spitting, raced down to the beach and rowed out to the ship. The hostess, walking wrathfully up and down in her room, listened to the remarks and outcries that came from her guests.

But there was no sign of motion on the argosy of scents. Instead, after a long hour, her husband returned to shore and appeared before her with a curious mixture of anger and sheepishness.

"What is it? How dare they? Why haven't they gone yet? Don't stand there grinning!" said she.

He was not grinning and hadn't been. But he waived the point. "It's—it's a cargo of fertilizer," he answered, "and—well, blame 'em!" he exploded, "they're not going!"

"Not going!" repeated the lady. Her voice rose and cracked like the wail of a misstruck chord.

"They're broken down—badly, the engineer says, and he's ripped his engines apart already to repair them, so I guess that they won't be likely to move for some days," replied the host nervously.

"Send the steam-yacht out to pull them away!" She stamped her foot. "We'll lose all our guests. I'll be ill! I'll die! Tow them away. Quick!"

The blend of passion and sheepishness on her husband's face increased strangely. "Eh?" said he helplessly. "Oh, yes, to be sure! Well, to tell you the truth, they won't let us tow them. They say they're going to make repairs where they are, because it's the only good anchorage. Besides, they won't risk taking up their anchor till the engines are connected up again."

"Telegraph to their owners—the scum!" cried the lady of the Queen Anne-Colonial-Tudor-Renaissance mansion, in a fine Elizabethan temper. "Did you tell those creatures out there who you were?"

He rubbed his chin. "Well, they knew who I was—in a sort of a way. And—as to telegraphing to their owners, why, they own the ship themselves, and I haven't

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any influence with them; on the other hand, rather the reverse."

"Well," responded she, "you've got to get them away at once—*at once*, do you hear? If you can't, just say so, and I'll do it myself—some way!" She stamped her foot again. "Why, you seem to take it as easy as if it made no difference to you! Do you know that Mrs. Raleigh is due here to-morrow morning early?"

The host of the smell-besieged citadel by the sea knew only too well that Mrs. Raleigh was due. All the guests that had been gathered without regard to snubs and hauteur, all the preparations that had been made without regard to expense, all their dreams, were solely for this crowning triumph of having Mrs. Raleigh. The very mansion itself had built into its every part the daring hope that some day its walls might shelter Mrs. Raleigh. Mrs. Raleigh—five generations had passed since the family name had last been pronounced Reilly—and Mrs. Raleigh alone could consecrate a family and house to real Society. Even those who were "in" society were in it only as the squeal is in the pig, so long as Mrs. Raleigh did not recognize them. Not until Mrs. Raleigh called on them could they claim to be an inherent part of the animal itself.

The host sniffed and groaned, nodded and sat down, his legs sprawled out and his hands in his pockets. In a room down the corridor a guest's shrill voice rang out: "What are those people going to do about it? Do they expect that we like their stupid house so much that we'll stay here and smell this?"

"Hang it, no!" sounded a man's voice. "We'll drive to the railroad-station even though there won't be a train till morning."

"There! Do you hear that?" gasped the hostess. "Do you know how hard it was for me to get these Wooleys to come down here at all? If they go, the rest will go. And you needn't think I'll stay and be laughed at! I'll pack up and go to Europe!"

She swept out to sue humbly before the famous Wooleys ($10,000,000 and no trade in the family in three generations).

Her husband stood up and swore with intense attention to details. He cursed the *Hiram Bunker* from stem to stern and back again. He cursed the engines. He cursed the cargo. More than all, he cursed the captain. Up and down and all around he cursed him. He cursed him hide and hair, afloat and ashore and hands across the sea. Then he began afresh and cursed him all over again as patiently and thoroughly as if he had not done an extremely good job the first time. All his remarks were in short words, free from scholastic ostentation, such as a simple, unlearned man could understand. It was a long, wide and deep reservoir of curses that he emptied before he was calm enough to fall back on colorless English enough to mutter: "And he looks so simple, too!"

He heaved himself out of the room with a last magnificent eruption of word-lava and walked down to the beach to board the *Hiram Bunker* once more.

VIII

HE RETURNED ashore just in time to find his indignant guests preparing for departure and paying the same amount of polite attention to their crushed hostess's apologetic remonstrances that might have been vouchsafed by a select party of haughty deaf, dumb and blind persons. It was only when he assured them on his word of honor, several times repeated, that the floating blight would be removed far out of nose-shot at once, that they condescended, austerely, to lend the honor of their continued presence to his establishment.

Having taken his first course in humility, he continued his education by abasing himself before the autocratic crew of his steam-yacht till those pampered mariners consented to tow the scented galleon away.

Unfortunately, the *Bunker's* ancient winches expired when they took the strain of the anchor; and when, at last, they began to tow the embodied aroma away, the dawn had come. The lady of the mansion, watching on pins and needles to see (and smell) the last of the ship, saw its name shining on the stern.

"*Hiram Bunker!*" she cried, with a dangerous tone in her voice. "Why, *it's your own!*"

Her husband nodded gloomily and bit his fingers. "Yes, it's my own—again!" he growled.

"What does this mean, Hiram? Tell me, sir!" she demanded, stepping up to him with an entirely new anger in her sharp face. "You told me you had put that ship away! Speak up, and don't stand there like a ninny, Mr. Bunker!"

"See here!" shouted Mr. Hiram Bunker,

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getting fiery red, while his neck, swelling, lowered toward her like the neck of a wrath-blinded bull. "See here!" He interjected a few short words of the 'longshore type. "I've had enough! Don't you dare try your blasted society airs on me! I did put the *Hiram Bunker* away! And the scoundrels that I put her away to, they brought her in here and anchored her in front of my nose! Oh, they're artists at blackmail, all right all right! I never saw crooks manage to look so innocent and surprised as that Captain and his Mate did when I went aboard and asked 'em what they meant by anchoring here. Oh, I knew well enough then what I was up against, and I've shelled out like a little man. Now,"—and another entirely new list of short words testified to Mr. Bunker's rich vocabulary—"I'll hear no more and say no more about it! The *Hiram Bunker* is going to be broken up for junk, and that's the end of this—the end, d'ye understand, Mrs. Bunker?"

Not far away, on the bridge of a disheveled craft that was towing out to sea in dignity behind a shining steam-yacht whose crew were nearly in tears, stood Captain Julius Moses and his Mate and friend, Mr. William Bowsun. Fondly they looked at a bundle of papers—a contract signed "Hiram Bunker" and agreeing to take over the single-screw iron steamship *Hiram Bunker* as she was; another contract agreeing to buy the Moses farm, mortgage and all; a check, signed by the same illustrious name of Bunker for $10,000; and finally an agreement to deliver the cargo safe and sound at its destination. This last paper was also signed "Hiram Bunker"; and a handwriting expert would have been struck at once with certain tremulous strokes in the signature that spoke of some violent and extraordinary emotion.

The Sword Edge of Chance

by T. Donovan Bayley

Who shall deny that chance is the sword-edge of the offended Gods? For They reserve Their prerogatives jealously, nor will They have them infringed. Go, then, so far, for that is lawful, but no farther, lest They be moved to smite. — THE MAXIMS OF THE VEILED ONE.

THAT The Veiled One had wisdom though his voice speaks from the mists of a long-gone age, this story seems clearly to show, but all may judge.

The beginning, then, of the Twentieth Century saw the first man to go up in an

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aeroplane at his own proper pleasure and come surely down at his self-appointed destination. The close of it witnessed a great inventor, a scientist known to the whole world of advanced thought, rise exultantly in a master machine, for it *was* that, despite what happened, only to find that Chance had smitten him.

What slow hours of stark terror that man endured before the fingers of a creeping death reached him and let him free, no one with any human sympathy or imagination can avoid realizing.

On a windy hill-top looking over the spread of the South Downs and the English Channel, a group of men, each great in his own field of work, had gathered.

A thunderstorm was forming, and the day was sultry and full of vague apprehensions. On the very top of the hill, in the center of the group, rested a multiplane of the heavy, exceedingly fast type. There was nothing distinctive in its appearance. A dozen like it passed rapidly overhead and unnoticed before the end of an hour. It was the mechanism, the motive power, of the machine that had attracted the little group together from many parts of Europe.

Standing beside it was R. E. Easton, the man who had planned it. He had been talking, explaining, almost preaching, for the past pregnant sixty minutes.

"It will change the whole conception of practical mechanics," he ended, "alter the world's methods and rearrange the nations, for there will no longer be the need to live in unpleasant places for the sake of such things as coal or oil." He looked round and saw that he had not convinced them.

"There's a flaw somewhere," said Bolton, the London County Council Chief Electrical Expert. A murmur of assent swelled out in answer to that, and little groups of disputing men crystallized out of the crowd and buzzed together round the untested machine.

"Ah, well! It's time to prove it," Easton said. "Nothing is of value if it's unproven."

"Here's his wife," said Mortain, the chief reporter of the *Morning Record*, showing a tinge of interest. All who heard him turned gravely to watch the slender figure of a girl hurrying up the path toward them.

"Mrs. Easton's coming. She may prevent him," Mortain went on in level tones.

"Not even she, nor any one else," Easton answered coldly. But his face grew paler.

The men of that late epoch were not easily stirred. They had learned to browbeat many things that had terrified the more primitive people of the beginning of their century. But this thing that Easton was about to do was bold beyond even their cool valor. It was pioneering where they, despite their icy intelligence, knew they would not dare to follow. It was too starkly daring, and they felt faintly moved to restrain him from the attempt, though eased a little by their feeling that the project was impracticable.

But Easton himself was stirred, and reverted for the occasion to a more emotional type. The wide horizon that his work had opened up before him, and the breadth of his own ideas, had induced in him a capacity for enthusiasm very strange to the men listening to him. He began to speak again and they turned their quiet faces and their still eyes towards him.

"Since the dim beginning of all things," he said slowly, a note almost of worship in his voice, "it has flowed upon its destined course above the world, following its mysterious path from the poles to the equator, revealing itself only in the lightning, in the frozen glory of the aurora—waiting till a man should come and make it man's servant.

"The earliest men called it the weapon of the gods—Jupiter's bolts, Thor's hammer—and cowered when it was made manifest. But we, who have learned to strip the wonder from the world, have reduced even this thing to the level of things fully comprehended, and, as our fathers did the tides, it only remains for us to harness it to serve our needs. It can be done and I am to be the first to do it.

"Think! The lightnings and the storms are only the leakage of its forces. It is one with the driving energy of the Universe; it is linked to the inexhaustible power that balances the innumerable suns, and infinity replenishes it.

"And now I am about to make it work for me, and, after me, for all mankind. What I shall do to-day will not be forgotten, and you will wish hereafter that your scepticism had never leaked out from your lips."

He stood for a moment outlined against

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the sky, and, caught by his enthusiasm, his wife held her breath.

"At any rate," said Bolton, breaking a silence he feared was emotional, "it will be a useful experiment."

Then a lark rose, climbed his airy spiral through the heat and poured out the very song that half-men had heard as they crouched in the sunshine skillfully chipping flint weapons.

"I am afraid," Easton's wife said.

A black cloud came up against the wind, and a few inch-broad spatters of rain splashed the bright metal-work.

"This, if I followed what you told us, should suit you," Mortain said to Easton.

"It is what I want," he answered, glad to say something to relieve the tension. "I knew it was coming."

"Why did you choose an aeroplane to work the idea out?"

"Because it's the most difficult thing I could choose. I can use no earth terminals. A plant with ground wires, if this succeeds, will be very easy to make and work."

"I didn't follow you when you described how you collect the current?"

"It's not current at all, in the strict sense. It has to be transformed into current. That has been the difficulty; that it is which has delayed me for two years."

"Then what is it that does happen?"

"It's like this. I have designed apparatus that has the power of short-circuiting the magnetic streams that are constantly flowing high above the earth from the equator to the poles. When you see lightning you may know that this has been done naturally, and that, at the same time, a change has taken place and that what was magnetism has become electricity.

"The collecting apparatus I have designed makes the same change. It converts the 'magnetic' vibrations into dynamic electricity—really merely a matter of altering the wave-lengths. That being done, it is simplicity itself to run the motors, for they then have a constant supply of power, the only notable thing about it being that it is got from Space, instead of from the sea or from a coal-mine."

"Won't it prove enough if you start the machine without going up?" his wife pleaded.

"I must go up," he said.

"Then I must go with you. Take me."

"I don't think he ought to, even if he could," Professor Vickars said judicially. "It would be unreasonable to risk two lives when one will do—if there is really any risk." The logic of it silenced her. Easton did not answer her, but he laid his hand on her shoulder for a moment.

"How unrestrained he is!" a woman electrical chemist said. The sky was even more unrestrained, for a flash of lightning crackled and the clouds were massed blackly.

"It's time I began," Easton announced. "I've kept you all waiting too long."

"I'm afraid that's my fault," Mortain said, thinking of the questions he had asked. No one else spoke.

Easton climbed into the engine-room of the aeroplane, and his wife began to cry silently.

And now it falls to Mortain to tell what happened, and he does it vividly.

"When Easton got into the machine," he said, describing the thing, "even the scientific people seemed to be a little impressed. I know I was, and I was aching for his poor wife. She seemed to sense something awful coming. There was a wicked thunderstorm beginning, with constant flashes of lightning, but not a great deal of rain. That was coming down over the sea.

"Then Easton's lifting propellers began to work slowly and a spitting sort of violet flame condensed out of nowhere on the spider-web of wires on the machine's back. I could see Easton busy at something behind the glass. Then he kisssed his hand to Mrs. Easton, nodded to me, and the propellers began to scream.

"In about ten seconds the 'plane lifted, hung about twenty feet up while you could count a dozen, and suddenly rose as if it were on a string. It went up till it didn't look much bigger than a beetle.

"All the clever people who didn't believe he could do it stood with their noses in the air watching him. They had to take back all they'd been thinking and saying, for they'd gone over the machinery with testing things to make sure there was nothing in the batteries, just as if Easton were a thief or a trick medium, but now they knew he was really getting his power out of the air, for I suppose that's what it really amounts to. I'm not a scientist.

"I was busy with his wife for a bit, poor

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little woman, and when I was able to look up he had wound out his planes and started the lateral propellers. For some seconds after this I noticed that the aeroplane swayed in the characteristic manner always to be observed when the gyroscopes are first rotated but have not adjusted the machine to their plane.

"Then it steadied and he shot away west quite as fast as one of the New York Mailplanes. He had not gone very far when there was a flash all round him that made me think he'd been struck by lightning, but I couldn't be sure, for he was two miles away and easily four thousand feet up. There was no thunder-clap.

"Whatever it was, it did not stop him, for when my eyes cleared themselves of the glare and I could pick him up again, he was getting down toward the horizon and looking no bigger than a gnat.

"We waited up there for three hours, and there was no sign of him coming back.

"Everybody began to grumble. They knew he was used to the air as a Royal Navy able airman, and so did I, but I could not help being uneasy.

"'It's all very well going joy-riding like this,' Bolton said to me, 'but it's poor fun for us hanging about here in the rain.'

"'Perhaps he's in difficulties,' I said.

"'Then why doesn't he come down and wireless us?'

"It didn't strike anybody that the reason was that he could not come down. Well, after staying there several hours the people cleared off and I got Bolton to take my copy to the office for me, with a note to say that I was waiting on to see what the end would be.

"If I'd waited till the end I'd still be on that hill-top. His wife sat up there till I had her brought down by her people, and I got a relief and we took it in turns to watch.

"Just a week after he went up I was lying on my back on the top of the hill, wondering how he'd met his death, when I saw the machine go over me. It came from the east and it went into the west. Next week I saw it again.

"Of course, the whole world was watching for it by then, and we kept getting reports in that he'd been sighted, always going from east to west.

"The papers were full of stories with splash headlines about the wonderful flight he was making, and what a test of endurance it was.

"Then the *Monitor* pointed out that as he had gyroscopes, which, of course, were automatic and need not be touched till he wanted to come down, and as they kept him in the same plane as long as he desired to stay in it; and as he was apparently going round and round the world till the air wore out, so that he had no need to steer; and as furthermore he got his power from Space, there was not much endurance about the matter, for all he had to do was to sit still and think.

"'In fact,' said the *Monitor*, 'if he were dead, or a wax doll, this wonderful machine he has invented would go on all the same. Indeed, in that case it would go on until the engines wore out, and modern engines, now that iridium is so plentiful, do not wear out very rapidly.'

"Next week when he came round he did not seem so big, and I knew he was flying higher. By the end of the third week every one began to get very anxious for him, and rescue 'planes were sent up when he was due again. He was too high for them to get within five hundred yards of him. The pilots could not breathe.

"As you know, he's come round once a week ever since, and it's eight years since he went up that day.

"Think of it! A dead man—a skeleton with its clothes on—rattling its bones in front of that wonderful machinery and going on and on round the world like a new satellite!

"And they're always trying to get up to him, but they always find he's too high for them, and nobody knows yet what it was that happened or why it is that he never came down.

"Try to imagine how he felt before he died, when he was face to face with his fate, and knew he couldn't alter it.

"His wife didn't live many days, I'm glad to say."

So much for Mortain's account as given in the small hours at the Journalists' Club after he, as night editor, had put the *Record* to bed.

It was Mortain, too, who first learned exactly what it was that had happened to Easton, but now the story runs on in Easton's own forlorn words.

In the dog-days, when nothing is happen-

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ing and the papers raven for news, a Hampshire farmer came to the offices of the *Record* and asked if one Mortain was to be found there.

"He's the night editor," he was told.

"Editor, eh? Then so much the better. Tell him I want to see him."

Now it is not etiquette to call upon a newspaper and instruct the doorkeeper to tell the editor any such thing. The proper thing to do is to ask if the editor will be good enough to see you, but at the same time giving the impression that if he decides not to, it will be a very unhappy thing for him and a distinct calamity to the paper.

So the old farmer was put into a waiting-room, and the junior sub-editor came along in his own time and asked in a bored way: "What do you want, anyhow?"

"Are you interested in that fellow Easton who never came down?"

"Not unless you've got some news about him. We know he's going round and round, for he's been doing that for ten years, and the fact has got out in that time."

"Well, I've got a message from him, and he says in it that you will be interested. Are you Mr. Mortain?"

"No; I represent him. What's this message?"

"If I'd known you weren't Mr. Mortain I'd 'a kept my face shut. The message says I'm to give it to Mr. Mortain, and I won't give it to none other. If he's dead, nobody'll get it. The poor chap up there"—he pointed to the roof with his thumb—"said he was to have it, and now he's dead I'm not going back on him."

"But Mr. Mortain's very busy."

"Well, the message said nothing about that, but it did say who I was to give it to; and as I can't do that, I'd better get home along."

"Tell me something about it and if it seems important I'll go to Mr. Mortain."

"That's as you like, young man, but I'll tell you nothing."

"How do you know Easton's dead?"

"Do you think he's alive?"

"No. But that's got nothing to do with it."

"Ah, well! Good-night to you. I've done my best, and the dead man can't reproach me now. Good-night." He rose lumpily, and started towards the door.

"Wait a minute," said the sub-editor. He knew news was short, and Mortain was not unreasonable.

"I'll go and tell Mr. Mortain what you say," he said.

He went in to the night editor, who was staring dejectedly at the first edition.

"What wouldn't I give for a scoop this night!" said Mortain. "If I couldn't get together a better reporting staff I'd raid the waxworks. They never get outside the news agencies."

"Well, there's a son of the soil in the waiting-room who says he has a message from airman Easton—the new satellite, you know."

"Do I know? I saw him go up. Who's this countryman? How did he get the message? What is the message?"

"He'll tell nothing till he's face to face with you. He says he has a message from Easton, and that that message says he is to deliver it to you, and none other; and give it to me he won't."

"Then bring him to me and tell the chief sub. to keep page two open to the last minute."

"Are you Mr. Mortain?" the farmer asked when he was shown in.

"Yes. Who are you?"

"I'm Josiah Brown, of Three Tree Farm, Hampshire." He groped in the pocket of his overcoat and pulled out a brown-paper parcel. Inside that was a weather-beaten, perished, india-rubber tobacco-pouch, which he opened with exasperating slowness, containing a little black pocket-book. On the outside of the pocket-book was pinned a label:

To be given to Mr. Mortain, of the *Morning Record*.—R. E. Easton.

"It's a bit rotten like," said Mr. Brown, "but it hangs together and you can read it. I found it plowing at the beginning of the month. It was turned up by the share and it's a miracle it wasn't scrunched to mush, for it was wet right through.

"I took it home and put it in the linen-cupboard to get dry, and then I forgot it. I've been busy with the farm, you see.

"Then the wife found it and brought it down to me this morning. It was gotten dry, so I opened it and had a read, but there's a lot in it I couldn't make head or tail of, but I don't suppose it'll trouble you."

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This was the "story" that page two went to press with an hour later. Mortain had got his scoop, for the mystery of what had happened to Easton was cleared up, and no other paper had it that morning. The *Record* went on printing up to midday, and only stopped then because the machinists were human.

Eliminating the headlines and the introductory whoop, it was as follows:

Here, then, in poor Easton's own words, is the story of the tragedy that overwhelmed him, though when he died will never be known; the hours of his agony will never be recounted.

"When I was up," he wrote in the message that has taken so long to reach the world of men, "I was glad beyond gladness. The receiver-transformers were doing their work, were fulfilling my reasoned expectations, and my dynamos were running by means of the power I had coaxed from Space itself. As I had planned, the magnetic currents of the upper air were short-circuited and converted into usable electricity, and I was flying. The gyroscopes were running sweetly, the storage batteries were—it was more than I had hoped—fully charged all the time, and the surplus current was passing away without hindrance.

"There is in all the world no feeling so keenly fine as that which comes to a man when he has translated some great idea into greater action, and for a while I was too happy to think, too charged with emotion.

"I was used to the air, but I had never been up in such a machine as this. It never faltered. I had not a moment's anxiety about my engines, for I knew that while the earth went round the sun and the stars hung in their places the power I was running on could not fail.

"I looked down upon the people I had left on the hill-top and I knew I had triumphed over all but one man of them, Mortain, the journalist, and one woman, my wife—for they both believed me when I had told them what I had invented.

"My wife, I saw, had fainted, and bending over her was the tiny form of a man. I like to hope it was Mortain.

"Then I wound out the planes preparatory to stopping the lifting-vanes and starting the propellors for a trial flight. I could just see the faces looking up at me, and I wished they could see me laughing at them, the cold-minded prigs.

"In spite of what has happened, I am trying to write this calmly and in its proper sequence, but I am frightened.

"I got the machine going forward and when the gyroscopes settled to their work I headed west. I could have gone safely to sleep then had I wished to, for gyroscopes, as most people know, never deviate from the plane they are started in if they are wrought truly in the beginning, and these were. They would have run free if they had had only the thickness of a piece of paper for clearance.

"The next thing I can remember was finding myself lying on the deck at the side of the engines, and when I got up and looked down there was nothing but a vast circle of deep sea below me.

"The gyro-compass showed me that I was still going west, and I knew that I must be over the Atlantic. Then I suddenly realized that my right arm was paralyzed, and I became fully conscious, for I had been in a sort of waking dream.

"I went over to the control-board, found it charred and burned, and saw that the levers and the crank they were mounted on had fused and run so that they were all in one solid mass of rapidly cooling metal.

"But it seemed hours before they were cold enough to touch, and when at last I was able to do that, I discovered that I had lost all control of the machinery.

"At first I did not understand the full terror of what had befallen me. If all had been right, a touch to a lever would have started the vertical propellors, and I could have sunk down like a thistle-seed. Now I could do nothing. The engines were running, the gyroscopes were working, and I could no more affect them than could an ant on a cricket-ball make it swerve a hair's-breadth from it's course.

"Somehow or other, athwart all my calculations and in spite of my precautions, an overwhelming voltage had passed through the receivers, had melted all the metal-work in its course and had passed out through the dischargers. Then the molten metal had set, and the engines were as remote from my intervention as the contents of a safe from a burglar whose only tool is something as ineffective as a bone paper-knife.

"And I knew that so long as the magnetic

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forces pull the compass-needle to the north, or till the iridium bearings wore down in the course of ages, the aeroplane could never stop.

"It would have been better for me if the engines had been destroyed and I had fallen and been killed. But the oil they ran in and the vulcanite bed that insulated them had kept them safe.

"I looked around for my tools. They had hung in a leathern wallet on the control-board, and the flap had been fastened by a brass stud. But I could find no trace of them. They must have melted and run into the other metal.

"Then I think I fainted again, for when next I looked out it was dark, and there was land below me. For hours I went over lighted towns and wide spaces of night-black country.

"When the dawn came I was hungry, and my right arm began to come back to life. I was hungry and thirsty then. Now I am dying for food and water.

"I have been in and out of hell for what seems like months. Hells of terror, of pain, of longing for those I love, of silence, of raving, of crackling laughter that must be my own, and I am beginning to see misty eyes watching me coldly—eyes without faces.

"So I have lighted my last pipe, and when it is finished, and this is written, I shall wait until the sea comes round again, and then I shall go out through the engine-room hatch and drop down into the water and be at peace.

"I seem to be getting higher. It may be that I am weakening, but I think I am getting higher. It is becoming gradually more and more difficult to get breath, and my ears have been bleeding. But that has stopped. I have no more blood to lose.

"There are hours when I can not see across the room; hours when the engines seem to be waving about like water, and the land and sea underneath writhe. I shall drop over soon.

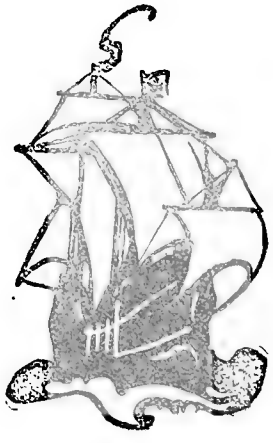
"But first I will put this in my pouch and let it go down when the country looks like England. Mortain must have it. Mortain believed in me.

"My wife is dead. She came by and told me so. She said she would not have long to wait. But it seems very long to me."

So ended Easton's message, but when he died, and whether he sank on the engine-room floor of his aeroplane or leaped into the sea will never be known.

But sometimes high-flying pilots see his machine pass over them, winging its strong way on its never-ending, purposeless flight, and each time it is a little smaller, a little more remote from the world of the living.

Once in a dozen years or so it passes across the cold face of the moon, like a tiny beetle across a silver plate, and whoever sees it then is glad to get in out of the night and harbor himself in the light oasis of a lamp.



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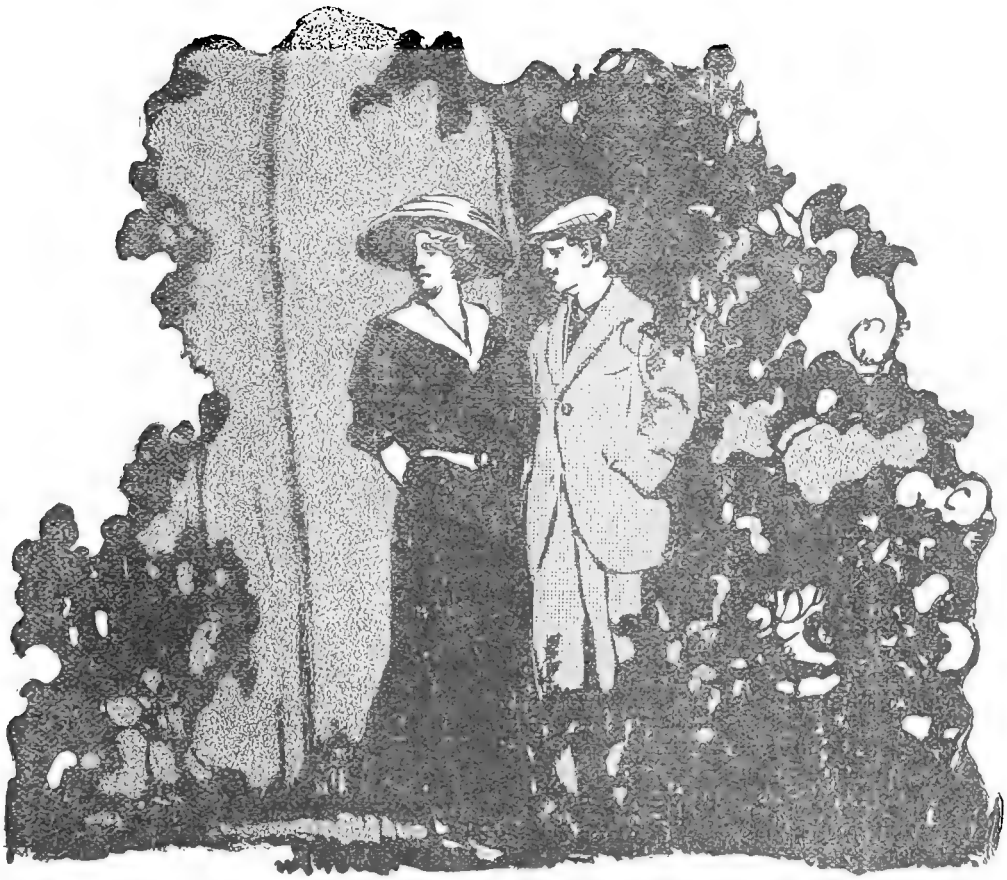

Can a Man be True?

by Winifred Graham

Author of "The Vision at the Savoy"

SYNOPSIS: Maldio, the young ruler of the small European kingdom of Lambasa, attempts to free his country from medieval abuses. His stepmother, Queen Horatia, has him poisoned by Count Bistoff so that her own son, the puppet Gisdel, may succeed to the throne. Bistoff, really loyal to Maldio, gives only a trance-producing drug. Mortimore Dugdale, English Secret Agent, suspecting foul play, is doomed by the Queen, and, at Bistoff's suggestion, sealed up in Maldio's tomb, whence Bistoff rescues both through a secret passage. Maldio demands a respite from kingship and returns in disguise to the English girl with whom he had previously fallen in love.

CHAPTER IX

MAMMON

PROFESSOR MAGNUS had lived the greater part of his life at the old house in Cambridge, and was so busy cultivating wisdom that he found little or no time for the common affairs of daily life. It seemed indeed as if he himself were a part of the history of the University town. He might have been a patriarch materialized from one of the stained glass windows in the College chapels, with his white beard and long thick locks of silvery hair.

The younger generation hinted he was past his work and were inclined to smile at the scientific experiments upon which he spent unlimited time. Oddly enough these

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studies never developed into anything tangible, for, though a man of deep learning, he was also a dreamer and strangely unpractical. Since the death of his wife five years previously, he moved about in a ghostlike manner and appeared utterly estranged from the surrounding world.

In startling contrast, his daughter Loti was the very embodiment of life and vivacity. Nothing escaped her bright, observant eyes, and her intensely lovable disposition endeared her to all. Though blessed with a rich gift of beauty, the compliments of innumerable admirers passed her as lightly as if they had been paid to some fair flower dancing in the breeze. Instinctively she suggested Springtime. In her sunny face the charm of early blossoms and soft caressing winds appeared embodied. Loti, so named by the Professor on account of his fondness for Pierre Loti's works, revealed some strain that was quite un-English in her spontaneous temperament. Yet it was known her father could not trace a drop of foreign blood in his pedigree, while his late wife boasted a long line of thoroughly British ancestors.

It was a warm morning, the first herald of Summer, and Professor Magnus paused to wipe his brow beneath the gateway of St. John's College. He was returning home to lunch. His eyes, wearing a strained expression, gazed up at the arched tower, as if taking in each detail for the last time. He might never before have seen the antelopes of Beaufort, supporting the shield which bears the arms of France and England, so fixedly did he stare at the graceful device. Then with a deep sigh he murmured to himself:

"England and France!" Adding in a mysterious undertone, "France, the birthplace of my Loti."

"Dreaming, Professor?" queried a somewhat rasping voice at his elbow, and a fat hand slapped the old man's shoulder with startling familiarity. He turned as if to remonstrate, but restrained himself upon recognizing a London friend, one of the wealthiest men of his acquaintance. In his heart he disliked this bouncing little merchant who had amassed such a princely fortune. Obvious self-satisfaction was an offense to the quiet, dignified Professor.

"Yes," replied Magnus truthfully, "I was certainly dreaming at the moment. The older I grow, the more I live in the past."

Percy Sharm thrust his hands in his pockets and critically surveyed the old man. "That is your great fault," he said candidly. "You are inclined to think the present will take care of itself, and it won't, my friend! In these hustling days the dreamers are out of the running in no time. It is the practical men who succeed."

Magnus was still gazing up at the elaborate arch. He preferred the flowery device to the contemplation of Mr. Sharm's unprepossessing features.

"Don't you wonder what brought me down here?" asked the visitor slyly, his round apple cheeks growing redder as he spoke.

The Professor lowered his gaze unwillingly: "I never wonder at anybody coming to Cambridge," he replied. "Perhaps, like myself, you study architecture and are a lover of these old walls."

A short laugh which jarred upon the sensitive listener greeted his words. "Well, no, I have not come here exactly for the purpose of worshiping coats-of-arms and heraldic devices—I am a lover of something even more beautiful than college courts and chapel buildings."

The Professor's eyes grew curious at last.

"Yes," continued the Londoner, and now he appeared oddly like a robin swelling out its breast, "I have come to try my luck with Loti—to offer her my heart and all that goes with it! Which is not to be despised."

Loti's father seemed staggered for the moment. He trembled visibly, growing even paler than before.

"Poor old chap, he is quite overcome," thought the prospective fiancé, hearing already in fancy the chiming of wedding-bells.

Professor Magnus bit his lips: "Has she given you any reason to suppose your—your affection is returned?"

Loti's suitor puckered his brow: "Well, since you ask me, I have not yet said anything definite enough to warrant a show of affection on her part. Still, I have triumphed so far all along the line; why should I not succeed where the affairs of the heart are concerned? I suppose no man in London has been more run after, but somehow those society girls never really appealed to me. They were too much on the make—

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just wanted to know a fellow for what they could get out of him. Loti will put them all in the shade when I transplant her to a proper setting and show off her beauty as it deserves."

"Loti's beauty needs no showing off," replied the Professor with quiet dignity. "Our little home may be humble—I believe of late to outside eyes it has grown very shabby, but Loti is none the less beautiful for that. The sorrow she has recently passed through was borne so nobly and unselfishly, for my sake, that I, in my busy studious life, could pause to learn a lesson at the hands of a young girl. Never once did she reproach me for conduct which now might seem not only unsympathetic but cruelly severe."

Mr. Sharm looked puzzled. "I don't understand," he said. "What trouble has Loti passed through?" His voice held a note of antagonism.

"Oh, I thought you knew," murmured the old man, a trifle bewildered at finding himself forced to explain. "There was a good deal of talk about it in Cambridge at the time and for once I was obliged to assert my authority, to check the course of love, seeing it must lead only to sorrow. My Loti had a royal wooer in the young King of Lambasa, and I fear she gave him her heart.

"They call me a socialist here because of my inborn horror of titles. I should certainly like all men and women to be equal, but that is just one of my dreams and hurts nobody. When Loti's royal lover lived—but now, poor girl, since the news of his death, she mourns him in heartbroken silence and I can find nothing to say. It is well for her the lad is dead, for now I believe it was no mere boy-and-girl romance, but a strong, pure love that might have kept her through life single and disappointed, true to an early vow of constancy. But had it been possible for Loti to become a queen, I would have done all in my power to save her from wearing a crown!"

Percy Sharm smiled. "Whatever has happened in the past," he declared, "I shall have a good chance, for money wins the world. Loti knows that, and you know it too—you, who need money so much!"

Professor Magnus turned his startled eyes upon the speaker.

"Who told you," he said, "that I was a ruined man?"

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT ISSUES OF LIFE

THE Professor's question came as a complete surprise to Percy Sharm. He feigned, however, a knowledge he did not possess, in order to induce a fuller confession.

"Well, never mind who told me," he murmured, concealing his inward satisfaction and attempting a tone of sympathetic condolence. "There is not much we business people don't know. If you would just make a clean breast of it all, I might be able to give you some advice."

They were walking side by side with slow steps in the direction of the Professor's house. The white head was bent and the pale studious face looked deeply troubled.

"You reproached me with dreaming," said the old man weakly; "you were right. I never had a head for business and my investments have proved lamentable failures. Everything seems gone. I have lived on capital and even raised money on the small income due to me from my work. The rent of our house has been left unpaid so long—we shall be turned out into the streets, disgraced—thrown upon the mercy of friends for temporary board and lodging!"

The Professor's voice broke. Percy Sharm could see the working of his hands and the swelling of the veins upon his forehead.

"What does Loti think of it all?" he asked. "Perhaps it will help her forget that old love-affair and appreciate the offer of a comfortable home."

He waited for her father's reply with an eagerness he tried to conceal.

"Oh, Loti knows nothing. I have attempted to tell her, but each time my heart failed me. It was foolish, perhaps, for now the blow will be doubly hard."

"On the contrary," broke in Sharm, "your kind thoughtfulness will be rewarded. In the same breath that you tell her of your financial ruin, you can fall back upon my name. She has only to promise to be my wife, and all the cares shall vanish. You can enjoy a quiet, studious life, with the full knowledge that you have a substantial sum of money at the bank, placed there by a grateful son-in-law who only wants to make your Loti happy."

The speaker could not conceal a note of

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pride. He expected to hear words of gratitude pour from the trembling lips. Instead, the bent figure suddenly became erect and the dreamer's eyes met his with a look of reproach that almost amounted to anger.

"Mr. Sharm," he said, "you have spoken hurriedly, and out of the kindness of your heart you forget that women can not be bargained for like the valuables you purchase daily with your colossal fortune. I would rather go to the workhouse than live on your money unless my daughter loved you. She is young and talented and could easily earn her own living. Let me beg you will make your offer before she knows of the straits I am in, so that she may not be tempted to sacrifice herself for the sake of an old man."

The nature revealed by this simple speech was utterly incomprehensible to Percy Sharm. "The old fool," he thought, "will change his tune when he feels the real pinch of poverty." Aloud he said:

"As you will, Professor, but remember I am a busy man. I should like to see your daughter without fail to-day. Nobody cares to prolong anxiety. I expect she will be rather surprised, though we have always been very good friends when we happened to meet."

They were on the far side of the river now, close to the Professor's home.

"If you will share our midday meal," said Magnus with dignity, "you are very welcome."

Sharm readily accepted the invitation. It pleased him to think he would find Loti all unprepared for his coming; he wanted to see her in the rough, to judge her beauty once more by the bright light of day. Their last meeting had taken place in a ballroom, where admirers thronged her path for the favor of a dance. He remembered well the dainty simplicity of her white frock, which revealed a neck and shoulders that might have been sculptured in pure marble. He thought of the diamonds he would place on that dazzling skin, and of the stir her beauty must make in London society.

Evidently Loti had been watching for her father's return. As they reached the door, she opened it with a smile of welcome. In her simple blue frock she looked even prettier than the vision Percy Sharm had conjured up in his mind.

As she greeted him with friendly surprise he saw that since their last meeting Loti must have suffered deeply and that the suffering had developed her charm. The fair young face was even more human and attractive, as if the spirit beneath had touched the great issues of life. Her adoration for a dead man—who to her was just a lover, though the world knew him as king—had widened and enlarged her sympathies.

"I must apologize for this intrusion," said Percy Sharm, but there was no real apology in the light words. "Your father met a poor wanderer and brought him back to the pleasant fold of your home life. I am going to trouble you for lunch, though I must confess to having no appetite, except a devouring hunger to hear from your lips all that has happened since our last meeting."

The little man's gushing manner filled the girl with genuine amusement. But Loti possessed the inborn spirit of a perfect hostess. She welcomed him warmly, though conscious that for once the wealthy Mr. Sharm must share a distinctly frugal meal.

"It is all right, father," she whispered, while the guest washed the dust of travel from his hot, podgy hands. "There will be just enough to go round, as I sha'n't take any stew. Really, poor Martha is getting fearfully stingy! She declares the tradesmen will not bring what she orders, which is so very unlikely. She also hinted, dear, that her wages were overdue. How I wish you would let me look into accounts and see how we stand! I am certain I could help you, and save money too."

His secretive methods were often a source of anxiety to Loti, and to poor old Martha, who ministered to their wants, bearing with infinite patience the Professor's unpractical scheme of payment.

"Yes, the time has come," he murmured. "We shall have to make a change."

Loti was quick to catch the quiver in his voice.

"What is troubling you, father?" she asked.

Fearing she would read his inward distress, to turn her thoughts he added quickly:

"A change for the better if you wish it, my child. Percy Sharm, one of the richest men in London—is here to ask your hand in marriage!"

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CHAPTER XI

A KING'S HANDWRITING

AS LOTI caught her father's words her blood froze within her. Though she knew him well enough to be sure he could not wish to sell her for money, the very fact that Sharm came to the house as a suitor seemed an insult to the memory of the dead Maldio. All the grief she had hidden and crushed for her father's sake rose up now and blinded her eyes with tears.

For answer she drew a gold locket from its hiding-place on her heart and opened it with trembling fingers, revealing an exquisitely painted miniature of Lambasa's dead King. She held the trinket a moment towards the white-haired man, wondering vaguely whether age could sympathize with this romance of early life cut short by the hand of Providence.

"Did Maldio give this to you?" asked the Professor, apparently much moved.

Loti bowed her head assentingly.

"Child," he whispered, "I don't want you to accept. Understand that. For yourself, such an offer brings with it many worldly advantages, but I am not a lover of the world. I do not wish to demand a sacrifice."

She ran back and pressed her lips to his forehead, then the sound of the guest's footsteps warned her of his approach.

Loti watched him enter now with new eyes. Beside him the phantom form of Maldio's exquisitely graceful figure reared a shadowy presence. She fancied she felt the magnetism of his touch; she thought a hand with the chill of death grew warm against her face.

Percy Sharm began talking on ordinary topics. She tried to collect her thoughts, to regain composure. She heard Martha murmuring at the door that luncheon was served, and mechanically made a move. The visitor from London walked so near her side that as he spoke she could feel his breath. The thought of physical contact with such a man appalled her. To be held in his arms, to suffer the touch of his lips—to belong to him! Would all the riches in the world compensate for the sale of her youth, the barter of her dead heart?

He saw the sudden change in Loti. He read fear in those lustrous, deep-set eyes. Inwardly he told himself she had discovered from the Professor the loss of their small fortune. Probably she knew, if only by instinct, that trouble brooded over the home. Critically Sharm noted her points as if he had been selecting a horse.

"Can't find a flaw in her," he thought. "No wonder that young Maldio went mad over such a woman, yet I'd swear she is as straight as a die—you have only to look in her face to know that. What a queenly little head! And the molding of the face—perfect! I wonder if she got her beauty from her mother? The old man is fairly good-looking, but there is not the faintest resemblance between him and Loti."

As these thoughts were passing through the quick brain Sharm talked of his various possessions to pave the way to his proposal. First he told her of the country house he had recently purchased. He had also just done over his town residence, as he was entertaining a good deal this season and expected to be honored by royalty.

At the word "royalty" the Professor gave an ominous sniff, as if the very word offended his nostrils, while Loti looked quickly down at her plate.

The momentary pause reminded Sharm of his host's peculiarity and the girl's unfortunate love-affair. He rushed on to a vivacious account of his new motor-car, surprised that in so humble a home his descriptions were not received with more enthusiasm.

"The poor girl is probably comparing their lot with mine," he thought, and marveled that Loti could shine in such poor surroundings. As she sat at the small round table she seemed to him like a dazzling star. But for her humble home and the knowledge of her father's ruin, he would have feared that she might be above the reach of even his gilded hands.

He noticed that the room was bright with Spring flowers beautifully arranged and felt sure that Loti's hands provided the fragrant adornment. Her dress showed perfect taste, while the most expensive lady's-maid could not have improved upon the artistic yet simple arrangement of her soft curling hair. Already in imagination Percy caressed those sunny strands of silken texture framing the sweet expressive face.

The meal was mercifully a short one, for every moment spent in the Professor's company appeared wasted to the eager lover.

At last Loti's father gave him the desired opportunity.

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"I must ask you to excuse me while I write a letter that needs an immediate answer," he said, rising and moving to the door.

Sharm smiled consentingly; he could hardly conceal his joy at the words. Loti sprang to her feet.

"We will have our coffee in the garden," she said; "it is so warm in here. Father never takes any, so we need not wait for him."

Quickly the guest protested. He knew the garden was small and easily seen from the road, while in that quiet room no one would disturb their tête-à-tête.

"Please may we stay here?" he begged. "To tell you the truth I have had about enough air for to-day. I came from town in the open car and it is quite a rest to sit peacefully indoors."

Loti was bound to consent and, simultaneously with his request, Martha appeared, carrying the coffee-tray. They sat in silence till the sound of her retreating footsteps echoed down the corridor.

The man stirred his coffee mechanically, then he looked up into the girl's eyes, fixing her with a penetrating stare.

"I wonder if you know," he said, "that I came to Cambridge purposely to see you. I came because, since we last met, you have disturbed my peace of mind, and I think I can honestly say no woman has ever done that before. If she had, I suppose I should have been married."

He gave a short laugh, betraying a trifling nervousness.

"Perhaps you know," he continued, "that for a man in my position it is not always easy to steer clear of matchmaking mothers and their designing daughters. I have had a pretty good dose of it lately, and I am tired of being a bachelor. Now you have never deigned to hunt a man in your life, and I expect any amount of fellows have been at your feet. I know of course you were hard hit over that foreign chap, but you must remember the old proverb about spilt milk. I don't suppose you want to spoil your life for the sake of a first romance. One can't wonder at a girl being dazzled when a king comes wooing, but he is sure to love and ride away. They can't marry commoners, you see, so that is always the end of those affairs."

Here he laughed again a little louder, for it annoyed him to see Loti so strangely impassive.

"I don't want to beat about the bush," he declared emphatically, "and I may say that if you will take me, Loti, there sha'n't be any grumbling over settlements. I am prepared to do handsomely, and look after your father, too, for I understand he is in a bad way, though I promised not to repeat this. Come—my pretty one, haven't you a word for me? Don't you understand? I want you for my wife!"

He edged up to her suddenly and his arm stole round her waist. She had listened as if in a dream, dazed with horror.

With a cry she sprang away from the attempted embrace, her breast heaving and her eyes blazing with a definite refusal. As she opened her lips to speak, the door-handle turned and Martha again appeared, bearing a letter on a tray.

"I just found this in the box, miss."

Loti gazed at the envelope as if transfixed. For a moment she did not move, but her face went white to the very lips and her breath came quickly. Then she grasped it as a drowning man might seize a raft of safety. For a moment Percy Sharm and all surrounding objects were blotted out.

Upon the letter she held in trembling fingers she had instantly recognized King Maldio's bold characteristic handwriting!

CHAPTER XII

WHAT WEALTH CAN'T BUY

LOTI'S excitement lasted only a few brief seconds, during which she seemed to live a lifetime. Then suddenly she realized that this letter must be one written before death and delayed in transit. Biting her lips with a strong effort at self-control, she hid the precious missive in her pocket; she must read it quite alone, when her tears could flow unchecked. In silence she had yearned to know some fuller details of Maldio's last moments on earth; now he was to speak to her once again through the medium of a letter, penned perhaps on the very day death claimed him and broke forever their chain of intercourse.

Sharm looked as if he could have murdered Martha for interrupting, and so deeply was his mind centered on his own affairs that Loti's emotion was totally misunderstood.

"Poor girl, I spoke too suddenly and the shock of this unexpected good fortune put

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her momentarily off her balance," he told himself with soothing pride. He dared not think that the very decided rebuff was intentional, though the startled look in Loti's eyes and her white, troubled face warned him against a second display of demonstrative affection.

"I know," he said, "that you were not prepared for what I told you just now. You must forgive a hasty man who believes in a wooing that's not long in doing! You see promptitude has become a habit with me—it is the secret of my financial success. I love you too much to remain in suspense. The many claims on my time would make it impossible for me to try to win you like the leisured youths who spend their days dancing on your doorstep. I know you are the most popular and admired girl in Cambridge, but as yet I fancy you have not realized the limitations of your present life. I can show you the world—I can make you a great society lady and, as I told you before, but perhaps not so plainly—I can save you and your father from ruin."

Sharm had risen in his impatience at Loti's continued silence and was pacing up and down the small room. His walk made him more than ever like a full-breasted robin strutting along a garden path in search of crumbs. Loti felt as if she were hypnotized by watching those short quick steps.

"I don't know what you mean about being ruined," she said slowly. "Our income must seem extremely small to you, but if anything were wrong my father would have told me."

There was a quiet dignity about Loti which disconcerted Sharm. She might have been the owner of a vast fortune and he a penniless suitor pleading to her to save him from impending disaster. The man felt strangely insignificant—as if he were claiming a princess in a royal palace. The thought flashed for the first time across his mind: "Is it possible she is going to refuse me?"

"That is just where the old man has proved himself such a ridiculous muddler," he replied hotly. "He possessed a clever daughter who might have kept him straight if he had confided in her. But the more entangled his affairs became, the more studiously he hid from you the real state of the case. Some people are like that—foolish people, you know. They comfort themselves with the vague thought that things must come right somehow. Well, as it happens, your father had reason to think so after all. You can put matters right through me. You can offer him an old age of luxury, instead of the haunting vision of the workhouse, for at present he is hurrying in that direction. Do you know that your home will be sold up? I am only just in time to save you from public disgrace and pay off a large number of pressing debts."

There was something oddly brutal in the directness of his disclosure. Facts were stated in a calm tone of bargaining; it was a direct *quid pro quo*.

Loti felt stunned. A thousand small happenings, stretching back across the past months, took a new and significant form. Even Martha's plea that the tradesmen would not bring what she ordered became less inexplicable. The girl allowed no false hopes to rise in her heart. She felt convinced that Sharm would not venture to speak in that objectionable tone of assurance unless his words were true. He had been with her father that morning—undoubtedly the Professor had told him the news he dared not reveal to Loti.

In a moment her mind was made up. She would face the worst in a cheerful spirit, she would work for the man who had worked for her ever since a child. The pain of Maldio's loss made other trials appear small in comparison. She felt as if the unopened letter were a living presence; its contact warmed the blood in her veins and instilled courage. Between Sharm and herself an invisible wall rose like a tower of defense.

She rose and stood before Sharm erect and graceful, her face so strikingly alive with the vital thoughts of a quick brain that it held him spellbound. This vision of youth, beauty and character burst upon him as a revelation of inspiring and triumphant womanhood. It seemed to lower the mercenary strain of his mind to a scale both weak and mean.

"If father is really ruined," she said, "I must help him to face the situation. We must do our best to meet his creditors. I have friends who will advise me, and though he is getting old, he still loves his work. I am not afraid of having to earn my own living—in fact I rather like the idea. Perhaps it will help me to forget that the one I love can never come back to me again. When you asked me to be your wife you did not know that I had loved and lost—that

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my heart was dead. Please never think of me again as a possible wife, though I am not ungrateful for the kind intentions you expressed. For my father's sake I wish I could return your affection, but he would be the last to wish me to marry without love."

Sharm's face turned livid. Surely the girl must be mad to refuse him, and at such a juncture! It could be only a temporary hesitation; when she felt the pinch of poverty her spirit of resistance must be broken.

He caught her angrily by the elbow. "You silly child," he said, "you are talking at random! You don't know the world, or what it means for a pretty woman to have to seek employment! Unless you go on the stage, your looks will be against you everywhere. What on earth do you propose doing to provide an income for yourself and your father, should he be unable to bring grist to the mill? He is old and failing—his day is over!"

Loti could find no answer. She had not yet had time to think. "There must be a way," she said, speaking to herself rather than to the man, "many ways. Anything would be better than letting oneself be bargained for in the marriage market."

Her cheeks were flaming now with the red blush of shame. How could he think she would give herself to him, without heart, love or passion, in exchange for his wealth? She touched Maldio's letter again and it helped her to keep back the angry tears that glistened under her long dark lashes.

"I suppose," continued Sharm, "you think you can live on an old love-dream and that it will help you in your struggle for bread! I heard of an absurd flirtation between a professor's daughter and a boy king. You did not know, perhaps, that you made yourself the laughing-stock of Cambridge! For that reason alone you should be thankful to get yourself married and wipe out the folly of the past. Lambasa's royal house has the worst of reputations, and though I believe the late King tried to improve matters, he must have had a pretty hard time of it, with that vile stepmother, who is a byword in Europe. I don't disguise the fact that I proposed to you, knowing well enough that your name had been singed by scandal. You set the gossips talking when you openly encouraged the advances of a man you could never marry. It was an indiscretion many would not forgive."

Once again Sharm had spoken at random, but the little man, hissing out his venom, had never dreamed that Loti's soft eyes could glow with such fire as leaped into their depths at the cruel words.

"How dare you!" she cried. "How dare you speak like that to me—you who can not understand the true meaning of love, or the nobility of Maldio's pure nature! You talk of scandal—you who think wives can be bought like slaves! How can you ever know what his love meant to me—the love of one whose short life was an example to all ranks of society, as a man, as a king, as a reformer in an erring land? He struggled for the right—he was too good for this world, too good for the throne of Lambasa! He died young—for the gods required him!"

Her voice grew suddenly deep and pain-fraught as the last words quivered on her lips. Then, fearing a breakdown, she turned and fled from the room.

"The letter!" she thought. "I will read the letter now!"

Martha met her in the tiny hall.

"Oh, Miss Loti," she said, "a person has arrived and he won't go away. He says he is a man in possession. Think of it, miss, a broker's man as sure as I stand here!"

Sharm had followed; he smiled as he caught the words.

"Perhaps," he said, "you had better tell the Professor. Please say I want to bid him adieu. I shall not return, understand—it is good-by forever."

CHAPTER XIII

A SUDDEN CONCLUSION

EVIDENTLY he expected some soft reply or tender entreaty, forced to the girl's perverse lips by sheer necessity.

Instead she answered quite calmly:

"I will certainly fetch father if you can wait a moment. He would be sorry for you to leave without saying good-by."

Sharm felt staggered at being taken at his word. Was there no limit to these people's stupidity? Would they possibly let him go without a protest? For the first time in his life the power of money had failed him. Yet he did not despair. Though he spoke of never returning, he knew in his heart that he would come back.

As he waited for the Professor to appear he turned and spoke to the weeping Martha.

"It is a bad business," he said, "and I

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dare say you will be pretty hard hit over it. But some people seem to welcome trouble. Take Miss Loti, for instance; I know a man who would make her a good husband—a man of unlimited wealth, and she won't look at him! With such a chance of putting everything right for her father, her behavior is almost criminal!"

Martha listened open-mouthed. Much as she loved Loti, she was evidently of the stranger's opinion that to refuse a rich marriage amounted to a crime under the present painful circumstances.

"Is that so?" she answered in a shocked whisper, forgetting her tears as she looked inquiringly at Sharm. "Couldn't you persuade her to think differently? Couldn't you bring the gentleman here before—" she hesitated and stifled a sob—"before we are turned out?"

"Quite impossible," he murmured. "She has made her bed and she must lie upon it. If you have all to sleep in the street it will be Miss Loti's doing."

Martha began to tremble. "Oh, sir, don't say such dreadful things! Will it be as bad as that?"

He put his hand in his pocket and drew out a gold coin, which he pressed into Martha's palm with his visiting-card: "I am a great friend of the man who only desires to save your perverse young mistress from ruin, and if you will let me know exactly what takes place I will see what I can do. Either write or come to this address, and any expenses will be made good. But be sure you say nothing to Miss Loti or the Professor."

Martha grew crimson with joy at the sight of the money, and dropped a respectful curtsy. "Indeed, sir, I will not forget," she answered gladly. "It is little enough I can do for them, me as would give my life for the master or his daughter, who I've watched grow up from a baby, bless her heart!"

Approaching footsteps cut short the conversation. Martha edged away towards the kitchen, once more holding her handkerchief to her eyes and making the passage resound with ominous sniffs.

The Professor had turned white as death, but only by his pallor did he betray that anything was wrong.

"I fear, Mr. Sharm," he said courteously, "you have come to a very inhospitable house. As you see, we have a less welcome visitor, who makes it difficult for us to entertain. My daughter tells me you are going. I wish you a pleasant journey back to town."

The words betrayed no invitation to remain.

Sharm took the outstretched hand limply; for once his loquacious tongue felt tied. Murmuring thanks, he turned on his heel without again looking in Loti's direction.

With bent head he hurried down the narrow garden path to the little gate on which the name "College View" stood out in white letters upon a dark green background. He swung it open ferociously and let it bang behind him as he strode towards the bridge, seeing none of the beauties of the old-world buildings standing out against an unclouded sky.

Her father answered Loti's many questions in a way that fully revealed his incompetence.

"I might have kept things straight if only you had confided in me sooner," she said. "Now I don't know what we ought to do. Why not go and consult Mr. Macmaster? He has always been a true friend and, before he retired, was a clever London solicitor. You could not do better than take his advice."

The Professor agreed. Macmaster, of course, was the very man to give the much needed counsel.

"Here is your hat, father, and do not walk too fast; it is very warm, you know. I won't come with you, as I have plenty to see to at home, and I must try to stop Martha's crying. You know, dear, I have a little money saved, so I will tell her she need not worry about her wages."

Loti smiled bravely as she opened the door for the Professor. Following her example he smiled back, but his lips trembled in the effort.

As she watched him go, she knew that the moment was at last drawing near when she could read that treasured letter from the dead. All these financial troubles seemed small and insignificant compared to the loss of the one she loved. Yet, with her blood at fever heat, she hastened first to speak a comforting word to Martha.

But at last she could be alone. She tore open the letter with shaking fingers in the solitude of her little white bedchamber,

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kneeling by the open window, with the sun bathing her in bright glistening rays.

As her eyes turned longingly to the opening page, the day of the month, in bold figures, burst upon her gaze with startling clearness. A cry escaped her lips—a sharp painful sound as if she had been stabbed. In righteous indignation she flung the closely written sheets far from her, scattering them in confusion across the floor. Then covering her eyes with her shaking fingers, she rocked herself to and fro in a paroxysm of despair.

"It is a cruel hoax, an impudent forgery written to torment me," she moaned bitterly. "But the person who played the trick has been short-sighted enough to date his letter after my darling Maldio's funeral."

The envelope still lay in her lap. She snatched it up, her lips clenched, her eyes blazing.

"An English postmark," she muttered under her breath. "I will not dishonor Maldio's memory by reading the fraudulent words! God help me, I thought one ray of light had come to brighten the horror of to-day!"

CHAPTER XIV

AT TWILIGHT

HOW long Loti sat in silence, the letter in her hand, she never quite knew. It seemed as if all her faculties were blunted by the loathsome thought that somebody wished to strike her through the dead. Was it perhaps true that she had become a laughing-stock? Could her name be tainted by scandal, so that unsympathetic acquaintances made sport of her agony? Sharm had spoken bluntly of gossip—had even said that for this reason alone she should be thankful to marry.

Suddenly her woman's curiosity rose above the sudden disgust that the letter had produced. Of course she must read the text, however deeply it offended her sensibilities. It would show whether the writer who had so wonderfully copied Maldio's handwriting knew anything of his nature or feelings towards her.

The first words startled her strangely. The tender opening of endearment was in King Maldio's own language, the exact expressions he had always used in writing since he first declared his love:

Do not think you are mad or dreaming. Do not fear that somebody is playing a trick on you when you hear that we shall in all probability be together a few hours after you receive this letter. You will have read of my death and burial, but I am no ghost newly risen from the tomb. I can picture your bewilderment, beloved. Let me explain the amazing incidents which have occurred since my supposed death.

Here he told, in clear concise language, the extraordinary story of his rescue.

For love of you, sweetheart, I wish to remain dead to my subjects until I have assured you by sight and touch that your Maldio indeed lives. I know you will have suffered. I am convinced that you are true to me still and will keep my secret from your father and all the world. Once it is known I am alive, we may again be separated as in the past. I have much to say. I have hungered for you with such deep longing that I grudge every moment which keeps me from your side. Nothing matters but that you are in the world. The thought of reunion is like a vision of heaven, too glorious for earth! I dare not venture into Cambridge for fear of being recognized, but I shall go to a farmhouse at that little village of Hinxton, where we took our last drive. You will remember our walk through the wood near the stream, and the tree beneath which we said good-by, lip to lip and heart to heart. Come, if possible, to that same spot—the day you receive this letter—come at twilight, and I will be watching for you. I will stay by the thicket until dark, and if you can not join me, write to Pender's Farm, addressing the letter to "Marmaduke Kingsley," my assumed name, under which I must pass for the present.

Even as Loti read she dared not fully believe. It would be easy enough to invent such a story and raise wild hopes in her breast only to leave her doubly sore. But would it be easy to know the words of love used only between them in private letters? Could any alien hand imitate Maldio's so perfectly? Was this not indeed some wonderful reprieve from the torments of bereavement and the dead weight of despair?

Her hands trembled so violently she could hardly fasten her hat or adjust her veil. A glow of exquisite color gave her the beauty of a damask rose. She was no longer the drooping lily of an hour since.

Martha was in the hall, conversing with the man in possession. They both stared with eyes of astonishment at her radiant face.

"Oh, Miss Loti," said the woman hopefully, "you look as if you were bringing some good news!"

Loti shook her head, but still her lips were smiling, and her sunny face belied her words: "No, I have nothing to tell you yet,

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but I am going out on a voyage of discovery, and—who knows, Martha?—the luck may turn. Tell my father not to be anxious about me. I shall be home for dinner at eight o'clock."

It seemed to Martha a strange time for Loti to absent herself, and inwardly the old servant felt convinced some great scheme had formed in that youthful brain. Aloud she said: "Very good, miss. I will look after the master when he returns."

Loti grudged even a moment's delay. "Help me out with my bicycle, Martha," she said. "I am in a desperate hurry."

The strange man, who had been hovering near, stepped forward at the words.

"Excuse me, miss, but I can't let you take anything out of the house. You see, I am here to watch and see as none of the belongings are removed."

Loti's face fell. "Oh, but I must have the bicycle just for a few hours! It is so terribly important!" she pleaded.

The man would have given much to grant the request, for he was not insensible to Loti's beauty and the eloquent entreaty in her eyes. But he dared not neglect his duty, and told her so, with very real regret in his voice.

She moved quickly to the door and looked out. A tradesman's boy was passing, driving a fast trotting pony. Loti ran down the narrow path and hailed him.

"Can you spare time to fetch me a conveyance, the first you meet of any kind?" she gasped. "I will give you a shilling for your trouble."

The youth accepted the offer readily. "Right you are, miss," he replied, as she handed him the coin, and galloped off at breakneck speed towards the town.

Loti waited, sick with suspense. What if the Professor returned to hinder her departure?

Presently the sound of wheels caught her listening ear, and a hansom came briskly towards College View.

Martha watched the girl's slim figure vanish from sight into the empty cushioned recess. She could not hear the address given softly through the opening in the roof, and wondered not a little. "She might be going to meet a lover by the look of her!" said the woman. "Maybe she has thought better of her decision, and is off to find Mr. Sharm's rich friend. She deserves a good man if ever any lady did."

As Loti drove away from the town through the green low-lying country her lips repeated, trembling: "At twilight! He said at twilight—this very evening—my Maldio, who was dead and buried! O God, let it be true—let it be true! Give me back my life!"

She looked towards the sinking sun in its bed of crimson and gold. She thought of the touch of his lips and from head to foot felt in fancy the warm glow of a fiery embrace.

At last the little village loomed in sight. "Stop at Pender's Farm," she told the driver. "I shall want you to wait for me there."

CHAPTER XV

THE MORGANATIC BAIT

"MALDIO, is it really you?" Loti gasped the words as he held her fast and rained kisses on her upturned face. This was no specter, but a man of flesh and blood, with throbbing pulses and warm eager hands that clasped her own feverishly and drew her to the shelter of protecting arms.

The silent shady spot seemed full of mystery and magic. Only the twitter of birds mingled with the whispering of the happy lovers. It seemed to Loti that never before had his soul so answered to her own, as if indeed their thoughts worked in unison as in one being.

Maldio's present freedom filled him with buoyant elation. He felt that instead of reigning over Lambasa he possessed the whole world. Loti watched with fond observant eyes the glowing life which made it impossible to believe he had passed through a deathlike trance.

"You are well," she murmured, when he gave her breath to speak; "well and so strong, Maldio! It almost seems as though you had never been away. The joy of reunion has made the past like an evil dream!"

Maldio sighed. "Evil indeed," he murmured, "since I lived beneath the same roof with a female fiend! She even destroyed your picture in her jealous rage. Your letters alone saved me from despair—that and the thrilling thought that when once I had instituted some much needed reforms I would return to England and ask you to become my morganatic wife."

He felt Loti tremble.

"You are afraid, my darling," he murmured; "you were always afraid of that."

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She could not deny the softly whispered accusation.

"Yes, Maldio, for the words have a strange sound and my father says they spell sorrow. A morganatic wife is married and not married. In time the real queen comes, and the love of earlier days, with tear-dimmed eyes and broken heart, sees her husband wedded to a royal bride!"

A vision of horror rose before her—a dark menace threatening future storm and bitter heartbreak. The romantic wood vanished; she was away in some new and fearsome world, deserted, cast off, widowed while her husband yet lived.

Maldio's loving voice, so low and musical, broke in upon the painful reverie: "Is that what you think?" he asked in tremulous accents. "Loti, such an idea is unworthy of my darling, and would never have existed but for the Professor's hatred of royalty. Do you imagine I would ask you to give up everything for me, simply to wreck your life? No, by God I swear that if this marriage takes place, though I may not raise you to the throne of Lambasa, no other shall share my kingdom! I will be true to you and you alone, until my second death! Since that weird sleep I look upon life with different eyes. I feel I have not been given back simply to become a machine, to marry at the will of my people, to be the slave of the country I represent. Love alone rules the world, and now that I have found you again—reached you from the tomb—I can not give up my happiness! I would willingly relinquish my crown, but not the wife of my choice, the queen of my soul!"

Wildly she yearned to grant his request, to give herself to him wholly and entirely, to risk future pain for the fierce Summer glow of a strong passion, for the ecstasy of union. Even if tragedy came fast upon the heels of this great romance, it was surely worth the suffering.

Loti knew that the excitement of regaining one she believed dead had gone to her brain like some madly intoxicating draft. She wanted to toy with destiny, to dream of a future controlled by Maldio. The extraordinary magnetism which dominated all who came beneath his influence chained her, body and soul. She was the prisoner of his will, rejoicing silently in the bonds of this great and overwhelming love.

"Only say you trust me!" he pleaded. "Only promise never to fear again, and I swear by Heaven and all that is sacred you shall never regret your decision so long as it lies in my power to shield you! Nothing could alter my devotion or cause me to break my oath of fidelity!"

His words rang true, spoken from the depths of a lover's tender, yearning spirit. Yet still some portion of Loti's brain warned her instinctively. A voice whispered that unwelcome word—"Caution!" Inwardly she asked herself: "Can a man be true—under such circumstances, with kingship calling to him from afar, with his country demanding an heir to carry on the direct line of succession, with the Court waiting for a Queen?" Bitter questions full of gall, questions she dared not speak aloud, yet they echoed through the silent wood like mocking music played by witches in the fast gathering gloom.

She stood with her face buried against his shoulder, feeling the beating of his heart, and the touch of his lips on her hair. Only Maldio, so full of sympathy and understanding, could guess the awful struggle taking place in the girl's mind.

Instead of pressing for an immediate answer he began telling her once more of his recent adventures, knowing well that his narrow escape from death would prove a double claim upon her trust and generosity. He pointed out how distinctly Providence intended they should come together by giving into his hands the opportunity of this secret visit to England. Very fully Maldio described the kindness shown him by Countess Bistoff, and tried to bring laughter to Loti's lips by describing the lessons in deportment given him so blushingly by the confused Heldra.

"It was considered advisable I should remain a few days to watch the movement of affairs and become accomplished in my new rôle. Besides, Bistoff had to get my passport and arrange to pay certain sums into an English bank for one Marmaduke Kingsley, his supposed ward. He has placed a princely fortune at my disposal and, though I can doubly repay the loan of money, I shall never be able to compensate him for all his anxiety on my behalf."

The words filled Loti with intense thankfulness, but the mention of money reminded her of the home troubles she had deserted for this unexpected rendezvous. She looked through a peep in the trees to try to judge the time.

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"The sun has set," she whispered; "it is getting quite dark. Father will miss me."

The thought of parting stabbed Maldio like a knife. He held her closer. "I won't let you go," he cried passionately, "until you have put me out of misery—until you have given me your promise!"

The moment of farewell broke down Loti's fears, leaving her weak and helpless in the throes of love.

"Yes, Maldio," she gasped, "yes, I will marry you, and whatever you command—I will do! You are my king among men—my heart will not let me escape!"

It was a moment of supreme surrender—a promise that could never be broken, a betrothal of souls. Together they walked through the shadows of the wood to the white road beyond, like two children in a fairy glade—sure of a glad future. As they emerged with radiant faces into the brighter light of the open thoroughfare, a man sprang forward, confronting Loti with eyes of fury and indignant scorn.

"So this is the way you mourn a dead lover—you smooth-tongued liar!" he hissed in her ear.

She started back as if she had been shot.

It was Percy Sharm, quivering with rage. Then, whirling round, he turned in a threatening manner upon the girl's companion. But before he could lay hands on Maldio, Lambasa's athletic young King had sent the merchant sprawling on the ground with one swinging blow.

Sharm remained motionless, lying in a limp heap head downwards in the dust by the wayside.

CHAPTER XVI

"WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?"

FOR a moment Loti thought Sharm was dead. She watched the still form with horrified eyes, knowing what the consequences of this deed might mean to Maldio. The huddled-up figure moved stiffly, and Sharm staggered to his feet, muttering angrily:

"Yes, it was all lies—lies! I might have known there was a living lover somewhere about, one you met on the sly, for it seems you prefer this style of flirtation to a straightforward affair! I was fortunate in discovering the truth!"

Maldio drew Loti away and turned fiercely upon the stranger.

"If you insult this lady again it will be the worse for you!" cried the King, his slight and fascinating accent sounding through the words.

"Ah, another foreigner!" cried Sharm, keeping his distance. "That is evidently her fancy! But don't be too easily deceived, my fine fellow. Remember you are taking Maldio's leavings!"

He turned quickly on his heel, not pausing to answer the foreigner's heated demand for instant satisfaction. And Loti kept her hand detainingly on Maldio's sleeve.

"No, no," she gasped, "I could not let you fight for me! Englishmen don't challenge each other in that way, you know."

"But the man has called you a liar! Is he to go unpunished for such an insult?"

"You have punished him," answered Loti quickly. "He wanted me to marry him—he proposed this afternoon before I knew you were alive—and I refused him on account of my love for Maldio. That is why he thinks I lied. He followed me and found me here, alone with you. Naturally it would be difficult to reconcile such an action with my words this afternoon."

"I am sorry for any one who has lost you," Maldio replied. "But whatever he felt, he had no right to abuse you in that disgusting fashion. Besides, any person who plays the spy deserves to have a rough time when found out."

They were walking toward the farm and could see Sharm already in his motor, signing to the chauffeur to start quickly. For it happened that by chance Loti's hansom had passed Sharm just as he was preparing to start homeward, the girl being too dazed by her own thoughts to notice anything on the road. Fired by curiosity to know where the girl could be going, Sharm gave his chauffeur the order to follow at a distance. During the tête-à-tête in the wood the rejected lover waited in a towering rage by the little gate. He told himself that Loti was false to the core. She had led the Professor to believe she loved the dead King Maldio, while all the time she was carrying on a secret intrigue. For that reason she had not feared to refuse the splendid offer which he, Sharm, had so generously made. Probably this other man could afford to pay for her favors, and would put matters right at College View.

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Cruel embittered thoughts still tainted Sharm's mind on his return journey to London. The day had ill repaid his expectations! He felt stiff after the violent fall, and smarted painfully from Maldio's heavy blow. He trembled at the memory of the humiliating onslaught, made the harder because Loti had witnessed his discomfiture. He fancied he could guess why another foreigner claimed her affections. This fierce antagonistic youth strangely resembled the photographs of the dead King. Possibly he hailed from Lambasa and encouraged the likeness by every conceivable device. He might even be a member of Maldio's suite, come to bring Loti some memory of the late monarch. Sharm could picture the hot-blooded foreigner, fired by the girl's beauty, posing as Maldio's most treasured friend and gradually replacing him in the grieving heart.

"I'll hunt the cub to earth! I'll be even with him yet!" Sharm swore to himself solemnly. "I think I know a pretty easy plan by which I can drive that young desperado back to his native land—with his tail between his legs!"

Sharm smiled for the first time since Loti had refused him.

"I am coming back some of the way with you," said Maldio, springing into the hansom beside Loti. "No one will see me in the dusk, and we have still much to arrange. How soon can you leave your home? We must be married at a registry office, and I will see that everything is absolutely legal."

The direct question startled Loti, bringing her back to stern realities. Quickly she told Maldio exactly what had occurred in her home.

"You poor little girl!" he murmured. "Of course the financial difficulties can be easily settled. I will pay a substantial sum into your father's account and post sufficient money to-night in bank-notes to tide over. You are to be my wife, and I claim the right to help you and my future father-in-law. At present we can not make a clean breast to him of my return. It would complicate matters terribly. I doubt if he ever would be reconciled to a morganatic marriage, and I should not feel my secret was safe for a moment in his keeping—he is too irresponsible where the things of the world are concerned. Martha seems a good woman; give her a free hand. Tell her there will be no lack of funds; say your father is to have every possible luxury. The feeling that he is well provided for will make you happy, and I want to start our honeymoon without a cloud."

The word "honeymoon" rang out joyously. What a world of meaning it held for those two young hearts parted so recently by the cloud of death! For the moment struggle and stress were at an end. Loti could remember only that she would belong to Maldio. Deep inward rapture bathed her path with dazzling beams that pointed to a haven of exquisite rest.

It was not till he had left her, and the hansom had stopped at College View, that her heart sank with sudden apprehension. She crept into the house noiselessly, but the Professor, as if by instinct, knew she had returned. He came out of his study, confronting her sternly in the hall.

"Loti," he said eying her with unusual sternness, "tell me instantly—where have you been?"

CHAPTER XVII

THE LOVE SECRET

LOTI was so taken aback by the Professor's question that she could find no answer for a moment. Then moistening her lips, she murmured: "Why do you want to know? Surely you can trust me, father?"

The old man beckoned her into his study. With trembling fingers he fumbled about on his desk for a telegram. "Read that," he said, "and explain it if you can."

She read the words aloud in a wondering voice:

"Keep an eye on Loti; she is up to mischief. Do not let her out of your sight. A WELL-WISHER."

"That was sent off from Hinxton," said the Professor. "I received it a few minutes ago. Martha tells me you have been absent for many hours. I am waiting for your explanation!"

He could not help observing her confusion. Evidently there was something behind the mysterious telegram.

"Father," she said at last, "I can not tell you where I have been, because that is a secret between two people. Funds are forthcoming to make everything easy for

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you again—money you may take without fear."

"Not Sharm!" gasped the Professor.

"Sharm would not help us without a reward," she replied, "but he sent that telegram. It was a mean and foolish revenge, because I declined to sell myself to him. He knows he has a rival; he is furious because my love is given elsewhere."

The Professor started. "I believed," he stammered, "you were still grieving for one who had gone!"

Loti placed her warm pink cheek against his withered pale one. "Women are always allowed to change their minds," she whispered. "And, oh, father, I am so happy! I have come to life again!"

The old man moved his lips in a silent prayer of thankfulness.

"I could not have expected such good news," he murmured. "I often feel this is no life for you—cooped up with a man of my years. It will be difficult to thank him, if as you say he really intends to lift this financial burden. But come, child, tell me the name of your future husband!"

Loti had drawn away. "For the time being I am bound to keep his identity secret," she said. "I want you to have faith in me, in the full assurance that there is a good reason for my silence."

The old man rose, his lips quivering. "A good reason!" he cried. "Who has dared to suggest that you should be loved in secret—and paid in secret, too, I suppose? Who but a man ashamed to show his face in our home, some scoundrel attracted by your beauty!"

"Father," she said gently, "I am not surprised at your misjudging me, only I think you must believe me when I swear to you, in the name of my dead mother, that the man I love is no villain. He has been faithful for a long time. He has brought me back the happiness I thought I had lost forever—do you grudge me that joy? All I beg is that for a time our love may be locked away in our own hearts."

Loti's manner rather than her words soothed the Professor's fears. She could see that he was softening, and taking the offensive telegram from his desk, she tore it in many pieces.

As the Professor watched her, he knew he must fall back upon the easy course of drifting with the tide. But all night long Loti troubled his dreams.

The following morning when she showed him the goodly pile of crisp bank-notes he wondered vaguely whether he ought to accept such lavish assistance from an unknown source. But to war against Fate was difficult; the old man had not much fight left in him. And he loved to hear her singing again about the house after her long grieving.

Martha watched the change wonderingly, and drew her own conclusions. Of course Miss Magnus was engaged to Mr. Sharm's rich friend, and the lover's ample means had restored the fortunes of College View.

Three days later the Professor came down to breakfast at the usual hour, and Loti, the early bird, was missing from her post. He rang for Martha and asked whether anything were wrong with her young mistress.

"Not as I know of, sir," replied the old servant, a note of anxiety in her voice. "But it isn't like her to be late of a morning, so I'll just pop upstairs and see."

Martha, of heavy build and slow movements, came running down again in hot haste, almost too breathless to speak.

"Oh, sir, Miss Loti seems clean gone!" she cried. "And here is a letter in her writing—left on her table—addressed to you!"

CHAPTER XVIII

DESERTED

THE Professor read the letter in silence. Martha stood watching, afraid to leave him.

"Martha," he said, "my little girl has gone away—without a word of good-by. But she will come back—she promises to return, and she always keeps her word. She has deserted me for the man of her choice. They are to be secretly married to-day."

He bent his head, resting his forehead on his hand. Martha could see his shoulders shaking.

"There, there, sir, don't take on about it," said the woman soothingly. "I suppose she will be a rich lady, and heaven grant she may be as happy as a queen!"

"Don't say that, Martha," he murmured; "queens are not happy. At least we may be thankful she is not a morganatic wife—

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I would sooner see her dead than in that terrible position!"

Martha was puzzled by the term; she felt it conveyed something dangerous and unusual. She longed to ask the name of Miss Loti's bridegroom, but the Professor made a sign of dismissal, murmuring as she reached the door:

"I can rely on no talking to people in the place. At present Miss Loti is just away on a visit."

Martha little suspected how sore was the wound beneath his outward calm, how numbing the fear which gripped his breast. Cheerfully she told herself she would wish the beautiful bride luck and drink her health at the lonely kitchen meal. She also recalled her promise to Mr. Sharm. To inform him of the event was quite different from spreading the news among the Cambridge tradespeople.

Carefully she worded a letter to the man of wealth, whose card she had treasured with pride. She told how her young mistress must undoubtedly have accepted the rich friend of whom Mr. Sharm spoke. And in conclusion she wrote:

It is all a secret here. I am sorry I can not tell you where the wedding is to take place, but you will probably know. As Miss Loti's husband is a friend of yours, perhaps, honored sir, you could give Professor Magnus some details to ease his mind.

"I will post it myself," she thought, "and I hope I am not doing wrong. The gentleman was that nice-spoken, and so liberal, I am sure he had Miss Loti's welfare at heart."

Her reverie was interrupted by the ringing of the back door bell. As Martha answered the summons, she was aware of a sly smile on the face of the tradesman calling for orders.

"Had an elopement in the family?" he asked in an insinuating voice.

Martha flushed angrily. "I don't know what you mean, young man," she said. "I've no time for joking this morning."

"Beg pardon," he replied, "but I happened to be round this way very early and saw your young lady come out with a bag in her hand. I noticed she looked a bit scared. Then a motor-car came along, with a gentleman wearing a black mask and a hood drawn down right over his head and ears. They seemed real pleased to meet, and Miss Magnus was up in a moment in the car. That's why I mentioned an elopement, you see."

Martha, trying to conceal her palpable interest, answered stiffly: "Well, I must say you have an imagination! Can't a young lady take a bit of a turn in a car without causing such a flutter? Miss Loti was always an early riser, and she has gone off on a visit to friends."

"Motoring folks do queer things," he muttered, as he turned his attention to business, feeling rather small.

The Professor went to his work as usual, and on his return Martha related the conversation.

"Even at that quiet hour," he told himself, "Loti's lover dared not show his face. Yet I am helpless—living on his charity!" The smart of the obligation hurt the gentle old Professor like a pang of physical agony.

"You did right to defend Miss Loti's reputation, even at the expense of accuracy," he told Martha, and the very words revealed to him the depths of his own degradation. From his youth up the Professor had practised and advocated an unfailing loyalty to Truth.

"By the way, Martha," he continued, with a nervous cough, "if Mr. Sharm should call at any time, try and avoid letting him in, and be sure you say nothing to give him a suspicion that Miss Loti is married. I have reason to believe he is our enemy. You see, he wanted to be the bridegroom himself, and I feel sure he sent me a very impertinent unsigned telegram."

Martha listened petrified. Sharm an enemy—one who must know nothing of Miss Loti's marriage! Sharm the writer of the telegram which had sent the Professor nearly mad with anxiety in the midst of his other troubles! And she had posted that letter to him with her own hands!

Sorrowfully she returned to the kitchen and took from a locked box the gold coin given her by Sharm. Softly she crept back to the hall where the Professors' coats hung, and with a sigh of resignation dropped Sharm's sovereign into one of her master's pockets.

"He is always so vague about money," she thought, "he will find it sometime, and never suspect that it came from me."

Her act of penitence helped to soothe her conscience, though nothing could recall the letter winging its flight to Percy Sharm.

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CHAPTER XIX

THE COMING INTO POWER

RED TOWER, a stately house dating back to the twelfth century, had been let furnished to a complete stranger, whose coming aroused no small amount of curiosity in Yewton.

The lordly owner of Red Tower, a great gambler, was known to be hard up. Those who knew how matters stood were not surprised at his leasing it, leaving his entire staff in the temporary service of the newcomer.

Much speculation was rife as to who Marmaduke Kingsley could be. Young and extremely wealthy, he had taken Red Tower for his honeymoon. The identity of his bride was unknown.

But to Maldio and Loti public opinion mattered nothing, as they traveled to Yewton after the brief ceremony that made them man and wife.

"I heard of it the very day after we met," he said, "and I asked Lord Rotherfield if he would hand it over to me in a couple of days. He was pressed for money at the moment, so the deal was settled up immediately."

"How little he thought he was turning his house over to the dead King Maldio of Lambasa!" sighed Loti, to whom all these strange happenings still appeared unreal. "Why is it called Red Tower?" She looked up at her handsome royal lover, trying to realize he was indeed her husband.

"It stands on a red sandstone rock and is built entirely of the same stone, with a high tower, from which the view is exquisite. The beautiful wooded hills almost remind me of Lambasa, and through the valley a river winds like a silver thread. You will love the terraced gardens; flowering plants climb there in wild profusion and fling their blossoms broadcast. The walls are hung with old tapestries, and no modern touch mars the romantic effect."

As Maldio spoke he knew well that even so fair a setting as Red Tower was insignificant in comparison to the royal palaces to which he would have wished to take his bride. It was bitter to think that this fair girl, with her queenly beauty, could never share his throne.

Loti little guessed the train of his thoughts, for the startling change from College View to the lordly mansion of the Rotherfields filled her with delighted anticipation that almost amounted to awe. She hardly knew herself, lapped in luxury, spoiled, petted, adored by a devoted husband. She was at heart a Cinderella transformed into a princess.

Now and again the memory of her father returned with a pang to rob the cup of all its joy. Then quickly she told herself that but for her marriage the poor old man would have been sold up, a homeless wanderer. In time she would return to visit her aggrieved parent, meanwhile writing to tell him of her happiness.

They had so much to say as the train sped onwards that neither found time to glance at the newspapers Maldio had bought.

"I believe," said Loti, laughing, "you thought those papers would make us look less like a honeymoon couple." She took up one jokingly, as if to bury herself in the contents. Simultaneously her eye fell on the heading of an article:

KING GISDEL'S CORONATION

MARVELOUS STREET DECORATIONS

LAMBASA EN FÊTE

She caught her breath. Maldio's eyes followed hers. The writer gave a brief personal account of the new ruler, describing Gisdel as a thin, sallow-faced youth who had never enjoyed robust health and whose home education differed lamentably from that of his popular and much regretted brother.

It seems as though the whole country were still paralyzed by a sense of loss. The death of King Maldio is palpably still fresh in their minds, while their lips are forced to utter the mechanical cry, "Long live King Gisdel!" By Queen Horatia's express wish the street decorations exceeded in beauty those of previous occasions. A vast sum has been spent in carrying out her instructions, and the capital is full of visitors who witnessed the imposing procession with a curious lack of enthusiasm.

Even strangers, who know nothing of Lambasa's Constitution, felt the lack of love and respect shown by the populace. The people adored Maldio, and his successor will be placed in a difficult position. He is palpably unfitted for the heavy mantle which has descended upon his shoulders. But doubtless henceforth the real head of this troubled State will be the Queen Mother, whose ideas date back to a former century. She is the most hated woman in Europe and it is easy to predict that with increased education the country will not long endure her old-world methods of suppression. Even in this hour of national rejoicing there are many who flatly refuse to take part in the celebrations, remaining secluded

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in their houses, which have been decorated for the coronation by order of the Town Council.

The article continued to paint in telling language the dazzling appearance of the city. The wonderful scene of color in Lambasa's Cathedral was fully described, and as Maldio read the words, a vision of his own coronation rose before his eyes like some dream of the past. The call to power, the thrill of kingship, worked upon him like a spell. For the moment the railway-carriage with his fair young bride faded before the entrancing memory of a great royal pageant in which he was the central figure. The old ambitions stirred to life—the desire to save his country from wrong government and hideous tyranny. It seemed as if the far-off voices of his subjects cried to him in the scream of the engine. Gisdel's weak face, pallid with fears of a coming revolution, haunted him in the gloom, while Horatia, with blood-drenched hands, loomed as a second phantom figure. His eyes were turned away from Loti. The small sweet fingers, with their warm human clasp, appeared as nothing in that brief numbing period of self-analysis and mental reproach.

"Dearest," whispered Loti, "you are sad. If I thought that you regretted this step——"

But he cut short the words by turning quickly and snatching her to his heart.

"Regret!" he said, pressing her lips to stifle speech. "Never let me hear the word. You and I must never regret that God has given us to each other. If I had not known you to be brave, if you had not sworn to trust me when seas divide us, I would not have dared claim you as my own. Remember you are a partner in a life which can not prove easy like the lives of happy people who have never worn a crown!"

Loti did not answer. The train rushed out again into the light, yet for her a first faint cloud passed over the sun's glory. Already her bridegroom had spoken of separation.

CHAPTER XX

THE MYSTERIOUS MR. SMITH

LOTI had nothing to complain of during the happy honeymoon days at Red Tower. The beauty and luxury of this temporary home, the passionate love and anxious care of her young and considerate husband, banished all dark forebodings as to the future. The marriage tie seemed hourly to strengthen that bond of strong love which had drawn the youthful King from Lambasa. If the distant voices called him, if the cry of his subjects still rang in his ears, he said no word of it to Loti. She little guessed he realized it was impossible for one in so different an environment fully to enter into the anxieties of a sovereign. He knew the day drew near when he must return to his post, yet he dared not mention the agonizing hour of parting.

Their joyful country life expanded Loti's beauty as a flower opening to the sun. The inhabitants of Yewton were busy with her name. Who was the exquisite bride of the mysterious Marmaduke Kingsley? The theory of a mésalliance evaporated when Loti's sweet face appeared on the scene. Her graceful bearing and sweet dignity gave the impression that she was some great aristocrat. Perhaps in her heart this happy wife of a kingly lover felt herself—a queen. She felt instinctively some strange call to power, as if indeed she had been born in the purple, a fitting partner for Maldio's throne. The stately residence of the Rotherfields helped the illusion. She knew the danger of day-dreams where fulfilment is impossible, yet could not but indulge the entrancing vision. It came to soothe her when hard common sense whispered that ominous word "Morganatic!"

The bride and bridegroom were seated happily on the terrace in low garden chairs, enjoying the glorious view and each other's society, when a letter was brought to Maldio in Count Bistoff's handwriting.

The sight of the Lambasa stamp always gave Loti a pang. Her husband opened the envelope and read in silence. He sighed slightly, then turned to her with his ever-ready and encouraging smile.

"Poor little woman!" he whispered. "Do you already feel in sympathy the burden I have borne since boyhood? Undoubtedly the words are true that crowned heads must ever rest heavily on their pillows!"

Loti drew closer. She wanted to try to understand all the serious matters which made it so hard to rule.

"How are things going in Lambasa?" she asked.

He looked out on the English landscape, then turned his glance from the blue of the sky to the blue of Loti's eyes.

"Not too smoothly," he answered, in a troubled voice. "Bistoff seems to think my

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death has made a great difference. He says there will be some great tragedy soon if the bitter feeling against the throne continues. He orders me to hold myself in readiness to return. The subject directs the king now—and the king will have to obey! Poor Dugdale has been at death's door, but now it seems that he has rallied."

Loti shivered. "Is that all?"

"No. I have a rather amazing account of my stepbrother's unpopularity. Already his mother is trying to arrange a marriage, but Gisdel will not look at the ladies of blue blood who would make suitable brides."

Loti winced. The word "blue blood" turned her cold and numb. "He—he is like you in that respect," she stammered.

Maldio smiled. "She was most anxious *I* should not marry, for I might have placed the throne further from Gisdel's reach.

"Gisdel has apparently kicked over the traces and set his affections on a notorious dancer, Mademoiselle de L'Isle, the very type to attract a feeble little fellow like Gisdel. Bistoff says she has been ordered to leave Lambasa, banished from the kingdom by the autocratic Horatia. This may bring about a serious quarrel between mother and son. If Gisdel should attempt to recall the dancer, it will lead to a serious situation."

As Loti grew interested in the story her own fears abated.

"Will Gisdel dare to disobey the Queen? Has he not been cowed from a baby?"

A faint mysterious smile parted Maldio's lips. "It is impossible to judge," he murmured. "When a man loves, he becomes transformed. If the passion is strong, he will go through fire and water for the adored one. The influence of such a woman as Mademoiselle de L'Isle must be strong for evil. She may weave a spell which even Horatia could not break."

As he spoke a stranger was announced on the terrace, a man with oddly sharp features, pointed chin and sleek black hair. The man-servant appeared nervous as he uttered the formal:

"Mr. Smith."

The stranger bowed stiffly without holding out his hand, and spoke at once:

"I am sorry to say I am the bringer of bad news." He turned to Maldio, after one long searching look at Loti's beauty. "It is never pleasant to disturb a honeymoon," he continued quickly, "but my business is pressing. Prepare yourself, Mr. Kingsley, for a shock."

TO BE CONTINUED

Sekokoeni's Raid

by Captain Fritz Duquesne

IT WAS noonday at South Zoutpansberg, the hilly district in the northeast corner of the Transvaal. There was a stillness over Trichard's farm that stood out on the brown *veld* between two *kopjes*. A wagon road came out of the west, turned into the farm and then passed off to the east, making a long writhing trail over the rocky ground. The white sun's rays danced back from the reflecting rocks in quivering waves, blurring the outlines of the distant landscape. Here

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and there, breaking the monotonous brown of the *veld*, were scattered the bleached bones of many animals. The Kaffirs rested their naked bodies in the short shadows around the farmhouse, a low, rambling, one-story building of rubble and wood with a thatched roof. The oxen and goats crowded under the scanty foliage of the mimosa, acacia and cedar which offered a slight shield from the torrid glare.

On the wall of a stable about fifty yards from the house was pegged a giraffe skin from which Oom Koos, the *baas* of the farm, was scraping the fat with his long-bladed hunting-knife. From the kitchen came the soft voice of a Hottentot maid, as she kneaded the bread, crooning a native air while the children of the house played about her, snatching bits of dough to carry off into one of the sheds where they were playing "housekeeping." The older girls of the family were sitting around their mother, who was resting on a sofa at the top of the stoep, with a baby a few days old at her breast.

The quick eye of a Kaffir caught a movement on the horizon. He stood up and shielded his eyes with his hands in steady watchfulness. The other natives followed his example. Oom Koos, noticing their action, turned his sharp eye in the same direction and, muttering something under his breath, walked quickly toward the house. Mounting the stoep, he kissed the white face of his wife, laying his heavy hand quietly on the head of the sleeping child. Then he turned once more to watch the cloud of dust swiftly moving over the road toward the farm. "*Vrouw*," he said, pointing up the road, "I never saw a man ride like that on a day like this."

"Perhaps he brings news," replied his wife.

"It must be bad news, then," said Oom Koos, "to travel so fast."

The troubled look on his face deepened and he stepped forward to meet the rider now plainly to be seen urging his horse to the top of his speed.

In a few minutes the horseman dashed into the farmyard.

"What's the trouble?" shouted Oom Koos.

"My God, man, trouble enough!" cried the rider. "Get me another horse, quick! I must reach the next farm before sundown."

A signal from Koos sent the Kaffirs flying to the stable. Whilst they were unsaddling the foaming horse and bringing out a fresh one, the newcomer said hurriedly:

"There is no time to lose. Take your women and children—everything you have, and join the *laager* at the Sand River, for Sekokoeni's *impis* are on the war-path, swarming over the country like locusts!"

As he spoke the last words he swung himself to the saddle of his new mount and, taking a bundle of *biltong*, the dried meat of South Africa, rode off at top speed with a parting wave of his hat. For a moment Oom Koos stood silently watching the rider and then, turning, he walked up to his wife and children, who had crowded around their mother, waiting for their father's command, for they had heard the message of alarm and knew too well its meaning. Koos Trichard looked at the little group on the stoep and glanced hastily round the farm.

"*Vrouw*," he said, "we must go into *laager* at once. Get the children, and I and the boys will look after the powder and lead."

The trembling woman rose without a word and entered the house, the younger children following at her heels. Koos took his *sjambok* from the peg under the eaves and cracked the heavy lash on the ground to emphasize his short, stern orders to the Kaffirs who were skulking about the yard.

"Bring in the oxen and *inspan!* Saddle the horses and round up the cattle, and be quick about it!

The Kaffirs scurried to carry out the orders, and Oom Koos stepped into the house to take his rifles and ammunition from the kitchen. Like all the Boer farmers, Koos had a stock of guns sufficient to arm all his children as well as the servants, and the girls were trained to shoot as well as the boys. He handed a gun to each and ordered them to look carefully to the loading; and every one took a horn of powder and pouch of balls, for at that day all the rifles were muzzle-loaders.

One by one the wagons, each drawn by sixteen oxen, rolled up in front of the house and were hastily packed with *biltong*, mealies and bread and the other provisions in store. Blankets, cooking-utensils and every article that was specially prized were stored away with the food under the big canvas cover.

Then the members of the family and the servants took their seats, the wife mounting

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with her baby on one arm and the massive family Bible clasped in the other.

As each wagon was loaded, the Kaffirs cracked their long whips, and the straining oxen dragged it off over the *veld*, creaking at every turn of the heavy wheels. As the last one rolled off, Oom Koos mounted his horse and, with one regretful glance over his farm, brought up the rear of the trek.

Slowly the lumbering wagons trekked across the *veld* toward the West. Oom Koos's wife gazed back through the slit in the wagon-cover at the farm as it melted away in the distance, tears welling up in her eyes and trickling down her cheeks. The younger children looked into their mother's face and wondered, and the older ones avoided her glance. The sun was throwing long shadows across the *veld* and falling red and glaring into the far-off hills. Oom Koos galloped up to the family wagon.

"Look!" he cried, pointing toward the setting sun, where could be seen, silhouetted on its brazen disk, the black outlines of a party of trekkers. "Look! There is Piet van Reenan. We must join him before dark."

Orders were given to the Kaffirs to press the oxen. The long whips cracked and rifles were fired to attract the distant wagon-train, which soon responded. With tropical suddenness the sun vanished and, shortly after, night fell on the *veld*. Torches were lighted by both parties to guide each other and, before long, Oom Koos and Piet van Reenan were shaking hands. At once Van Reenan's train fell in behind. Far off to the right of the wagons a light flashed to and fro in the darkness, a signal of another trek which soon joined us, and before midnight half a dozen more trains stretched out in a long string over the *veld*, Jan Maritz's bringing up the rear.

Slowly the wagons trailed through the darkness under a sky sparkling with stars.

The men scouted on the flanks, for we could not tell at what moment we might enter a Kaffir ambush. Oom Koos, always daring, rode far ahead. Suddenly a flash and crash came out of the darkness and the next moment Koos came galloping back toward the wagons.

"*Laager! Laager!*" he cried. "The Kaffirs are in the grass!"

With a rapidity that comes from long practise, the wagons were formed into a square, enclosing the oxen and horses. The heavy baggage that would make a shield was piled up on the outer side. Everything that would add to the defense of the *laager* was prepared. Stones and earth were packed between the wheels and every arm was loaded. The children's hands were filled with bullets to pass to the marksmen as soon as their guns were discharged, and canisters of powder were placed ready for instant use.

The men stood on guard about two hundred yards from the wagons, and the women waited silently, hushing the cries of the fretting infants.

The chill of early morning came over the *veld*, and the eyes of the watchers were closing with irresistible weariness in spite of the lurking danger. A pale light in the east began to show the jagged edges of Zoutpansberg, intensifying the deep indigo of the sky above. The women in the camps and the men not on guard clustered on the open ground in the *laager* to say their morning prayers, holding their loaded rifles for instant action.

Suddenly the low plaintive chant was pierced by the sharp crack of a rifle from the surrounding *veld*, answered by the flashes from the guns of the guards, who immediately fell back within the barrier of the wagons. The men and women who had been praying took their stand between the wheels and under the cover of the wagons to repel the attack. The younger children, awakening in fright, crept close to their parents.

As it grew lighter around the *laager* we could see the ostrich plumes of the Kaffirs in the grass crawling toward us from every side. Not a word of command was spoken. Every one knew his duty and held his fire for the rush that was certain to come. With a fearful cry a ring of black warriors rose to their feet and charged on the *laager*, holding their shields outstretched and hurling their *assegais* as soon as they came within reach. Those who were armed with English rifles lay behind the rocks on the *veld* and supported the charge with a hot fire.

We waited until the Kaffirs were almost on the *laager* before we met them with a crushing volley that piled up the first ranks in heaps, but the mass behind plunged madly on until we checked them at the wheels of our wagons with shot after shot, as fast as the girls could hand us our spare and reloaded rifles.

Still the fierce tribesmen would not fall back, and showered the *laager* with *as-*

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segais, tearing through the wagon-covers and wounding or killing whomever they struck. Some tried to force their way between the wagons, and others clutched at the rails and tried to swing themselves up, stabbing desperately at the defenders with their steel-pointed spears. We struck back with clubbed rifles, breaking heads and arms with every blow, while the men and women behind us kept up an incessant fire through every opening. Some of our women bore away the sorely wounded to lay them behind any cover that could be found, but most kept on fighting as stubbornly as the men. When the rifles got too hot to be held the women ran the barrels through wet cloths to keep them in service, for every gun was needed.

In spite of the incessant fire and the frightful slaughter around the *laager* we could not beat the Kaffirs off, for new rings kept charging as fast as the ranks were broken. They were desperately determined to break through the square to attack us on the weak side. To protect themselves from our bullets they grabbed up the bodies of the dead to use for shields and flung themselves at every opening between the wagons. The surge pressed so hotly that our women caught up handfuls of pepper and sand, mixed for the purpose, and dashed it into their brutal faces till the stormers fell back, blinded.

After hours of desperate fighting without piercing our defense, the Kaffirs recoiled sullenly to gather their forces for another mode of attack. It was not long before the grass was blazing in a great circle around the *laager*. This was what we feared most, for the blacks, shielded by the smoke, might storm the wagons with an irresistible rush. There was the danger, too, that the *laager* would catch fire and we should be forced out on the open *veld*.

Some of the Kaffirs climbed to higher ground, while the grass was burning, and kept up a harassing fire with their rifles. Now and again one of our men in the *laager* was picked off, and we could not afford to lose a single defender. Men, women and children were lying around, dead and wounded.

As the flames, fanned by the wind, came nearer to the wagons, some of us tore up the grass within the *laager* and others sallied outside to clear the grass away and pack the bodies of the dead Kaffirs in a circle to break the fire. But the men who were outside the *laager* were soon driven in by the flames and the *assegais* hurled in under cover of the smoke thickening around us. Again the wagons were manned for defense and there was a call for powder.

A barrel of powder, the last of our stock, was standing in a corner of the *laager*, where the wounded lay. Just as the call came, a bullet from one of the Kaffir marksmen struck it and knocked the top off by cutting the hoop, scattering streaks of powder for yards over the ground. By this time the grass was burning at our wagon-wheels and the flames were creeping inside the *laager*.

A cry of dismay rose from the women, but Helen Maritz, one of the young girls, darted forward and threw her body over the open barrel to cover the powder. An instant later, scattered grains, spilled by the Kaffir's shot, flashed up with a huge puff of flame and smoke. All looked, horror-struck, for an explosion that would shatter the *laager*, but when the smoke blew away we saw the girl still clasping the barrel which she had saved. We ran to her aid and found her living, though stunned by the shock and terribly burned.

Fortunately the Kaffirs did not know how greatly our force had been weakened, and when we resolved to make a desperate effort to break their attack by a sortie, they took the forlorn hope for a bold defiance. Mounting on horses, two thirds of our party dashed out of the *laager*, cut through the attacking lines and, wheeling instantly, fell upon them from the rear. The density of the smoke luckily prevented their rallying and hid from them the weakness of our force. When we shattered the center, the divided wings lost heart and fled in wild disorder. We kept up a running fight for miles and did not return to camp until we had thrashed the heart out of the raiders of Sekokoeni.

The graves of the Boers who fell in that fearful fight are still kept green on the banks of the Sand River. Among them are those of my Uncle Koos, his wife and her baby. I was only a boy of twelve on the Zoutpansberg farm when the call came to me to fight for my life in the *laager*.

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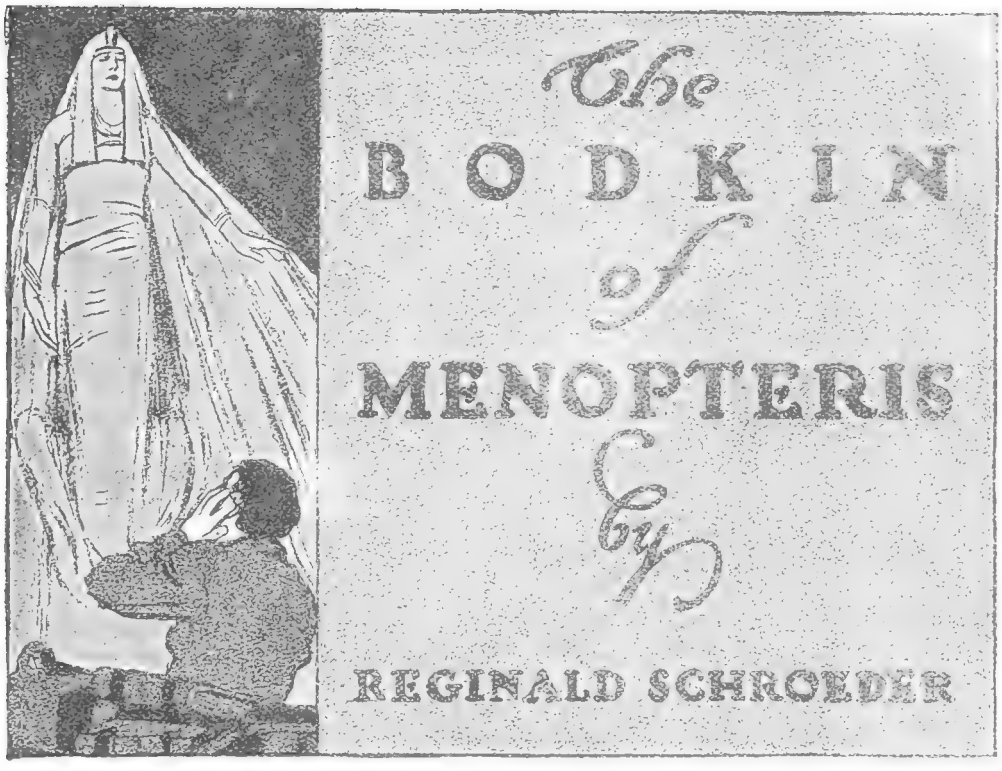

"CONGRATULATIONS, my dear Ormsley, congratulations from all my heart!" Professor Hillenbroeck, author of the famous work on "Para-Brome-Meta-Nitro-Benzoic Acid and Its Relations to Radio-Activity in the Economy of Nature," likewise head of the world-renowned Smithsonian Institution, nodded benevolently to his young assistant.

"A splendid triumph, to be sure; the height of ambition attained—a veritable Princess—ahem—constructively at least—quite a distinguished acquisition! Even though her Royal Highness *in absentia* might be considered a trifle ancient and too nebulous to arouse the tender passion, hahaha!"

The great scientist adjusted his ample gold-rimmed spectacles very circumstantially to observe the effect of his little scientific jest.

Merwyn Ormsley, assistant curator of the Smithsonian, sat profoundly absorbed in thought before a long, slender case of peculiar workmanship, richly adorned with strange imagery, quaint characters and arabesques—the casket of an Egyptian mummy. So thoroughly was he engrossed that he scarcely realized the kindhearted praise which the eminent scientist lavished upon him. Still a young man, somewhat past thirty, Ormsley had devoted himself exclusively to the study of Egyptology, being so thorough and exhaustive that one of these days he would be counted among the leading Egyptologists of the world. And that was his ambition.

The casket was empty. For some thousand years it had been the mortuary abode of a great Princess, presumably an offspring of the Ptolemæan Kings. But now the distinguished occupant had vanished from her erstwhile resting-place; nothing but this wooden shell remained, a dim and dust-stained memory of the mysterious Royal Lady whose counterfeit presentment adorned the cover, showing lines of wondrous beauty rendered even more subtly entrancing by the disdainful, cruel curving of the lips.

"Quite obsessed, I see," commented the Professor good-humoredly after a little pause, "but you have a right to be. I learn from the public prints that it is truly a rare

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find. The casket boasts of a history? Have you any reliable details?"

The young curator looked up with a start. "Forgive me, Professor Hillenbroeck; I did not mean to be rude." Then, shaking his head disappointedly: "All I've learned so far is that the casket was prepared for the Princess Menopteris, belonging to the eighteenth dynasty. Also it appears that she was a Priestess of Isis."

"You are inclined to believe that there is some foundation for those vague allusions to the mysterious influences surrounding the relic?" asked the Professor.

"I wouldn't care to commit myself definitely on that point," replied Ormsley, "but the evidence looks pretty strong. I have an interesting letter from Buyckstoven, the Leyden Egyptologist. You have heard of him?—a thoroughly serious man and painstaking in the extreme. He confirms the correctness of the newspaper reports with much detail. Let me read to you what he says." He drew a letter from his breast pocket and, passing over the introductory sentences, read this:

"I have ascertained authentic particulars. Five Englishmen, traveling in Egypt not quite three years ago, bought the casket from a native and had it sent to their home in Berkshire, undoubtedly intending to sell the relic to a museum or some dealer at a profit. It was stored at the country house of one of the five.

"Not long thereafter the owner of the house met with an accident at a grouse-hunt; the barrel of his gun exploded from no ascertainable cause, and the full charge entered his arm, which had to be amputated. Within a year a second one of these friends committed suicide, having been robbed of his fortune. A third met his fate a few weeks later by drowning in a bog. The fourth also lost everything he possessed and died suddenly from heart-failure, though he had been a perfectly healthy man up to that time.

"The last survivor, whose suspicion may have been aroused in some unexplained manner—he can not be prevailed upon to say a word about it—made a present of the casket to his married sister, and the relic was transferred to her residence. A long list of mishaps befell that family—illness, financial losses; in the end the lady of the house became demented and had to be interned in an insane asylum. The husband then decided to rid himself of that uncanny object and hired a drayman to take it to a dealer in curios. While it was being unloaded one of the horses became unruly and the owner of the team was crushed under one of the heavy wheels—both legs broken.

"The curio dealer, the same from whose estate you obtained the casket, wished to take a photograph of the cover for advertising purposes. The result was remarkable. The negative showed an amazing discrepancy from the original; it was blurred, and the features of the image appeared frightfully distorted. They resembled those of a real human being seized with a sudden fit of rage. The dealer died within a fortnight from spasms——"

His face a shade paler, Merwyn Ormsley turned to the Professor: "What do you think of it?" he said, scarcely able to control his excitement.

"Hmh!" Professor Hillenbroeck stroked his scant whiskers thoughtfully. "Peculiar, to be sure. Still, those occurrences are capable of natural explanations. I dare say people fall ill, lose their fortunes, become demented and die through accident or otherwise without having been affected by uncanny influences. But there is an interesting field for speculation—and research, perhaps."

In spite of his own common-sense argument Professor Hillenbroeck was profoundly stirred by the recital, and deep furrows appeared on his forehead. Presently he looked up. He had come to a conclusion.

"Ormsley," he said deliberately, "I am willing to trust you with a professional secret of considerable magnitude that may be of importance to you. I have been fortunate enough to discover a method of amplifying and reenforcing the penetrative powers of radium as a reactive agent by the addition of certain chemical solvents of great potency, so as to make an all but negligible supply of that rare metal do well-nigh unlimited service. The discovery is of inestimable value to scientific photography."

The Professor paused and, clearing his throat slightly, proceeded in a confidential whisper: "Most delicate feats are possible, for I have ascertained the amazing fact that corridium will so intensely influence properly neutralized plates that objects beyond the reach of the physical eye are reproduced. I am confident that the ray of corridium penetrates into the fourth dimension!"

Professor Hillenbroeck folded his hands over his stomach and contemplated his junior in science with unspeakable comfort, exuding conscious pride from every pore.

Merwyn Ormsley had listened with respectful attention. The last statement, however, aroused him intensely. His devotion to Orientalism had frequently led him into the field of mystic endeavors, and now the Professor touched upon a chord that had been secretly vibrating in his soul for years.

"You mean," said he, bending forward impulsively, "that with the aid of your

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preparation the presence of disembodied spirits may be disclosed?"

"Exactly," rejoined the Professor with great complacency. "I have not reached that point in practical experience, but I have *indicia* that lead up to it. I am on the threshold of astounding developments. Merely the opportunity has been lacking, the instrumentality is in my grasp. I will show it to you."

He went down the stairs to his own room and returned immediately with a medium-sized, air-tight, steel vial. "This vial, which is lined with glass to prevent corrosion—my own idea," he said to Ormsley, "contains about ten ounces of my mixture, corridium; quite sufficient to conduct extended tests in many directions. However," he added gravely, "the *materia magica* must be handled with utmost care, because the compound proves to be the deadliest poison ever contrived by human skill."

"And you have succeeded in producing this marvelous substance by the process of chemical reaction?" asked Ormsley, staring fixedly at the unpretentious steel tube in the Professor's hands.

"Tush, tush," said Hillenbroeck with an indulgent smile. "The theory claiming credit for dynamic reaction of the molecules has long been exploded, my dear Ormsley. It is superseded by the more modern conceptions of the affinity of atoms, and my discovery is based on this latter fundamental principle. But you understand," he cocked his eye shrewdly, "in justice to myself I could not divulge the formula prematurely."

Hillenbroeck took the vial gingerly between two fingers and looked at it with a father's fondness for a favorite child that has given him worlds of trouble. "I expect to start on a series of experiments in a few days; some neutralized plates are ready for use," he said. "The results will astonish our brethren in science, I am quite certain of that."

A parting nod, and the Professor left Ormsley to his own ruminations.

II

DUSK had been followed by darkness. Through the tall, narrow windows came the dreamy voices of night from the park beyond, the soft rustling of the trees and faint squeaks of bats floating on the balmy June breezes. Solemn stillness held the great building where deep shadows had settled over the spacious halls and the countless recesses filled with glass cases, freaky totem-poles and the images of hideous Aztec gods.

On the upper gallery tier, close to his library, sat Merwyn Ormsley, stacks of books around him—bulky volumes of reference and portfolios holding illustrated commentaries on cardboard, dealing with Egyptian antiquities. One large droplight covered by an ample dark-green shade concentrated the glare of a cluster of electric bulbs on the casket and part of the table where he pursued his task of deciphering the weird characters crowding various parts of the mortuary chest. Hours had passed and the finger of the clock was well on its way toward midnight.

But Ormsley, eagerly intent upon his work, had not heeded the flight of time nor had he felt the need of food in the flush of success as slowly, step by step, that quaint script revealed to him the flowery tribute to the wondrous accomplishments and deep learning of the illustrious Dead, and the pathetic lamentations with which the author of the inscription bewailed the fate of the beautiful Royal Priestess whose early demise had been ordained by Isis, the Stern and Inscrutable, in her infinite wisdom.

The incessant labor, straining his every faculty, finally began to tell on his nerves, a feeling of dizziness overcame him and, supporting his head on his elbow, he stared half drowsily at the painfully regular lines of imagery before him. The strange characters seemed to move, his vision became blurred and he closed his aching eyes for a moment. Then, imperceptibly, the faint scent of pungent perfumes came to him; it grew more distinct and voluminous, until the air seemed fairly saturated with an all-pervading fragrance of mysterious and almost oppressive sweetness.

Ormsley opened his eyes heavily and stared about him in bewilderment. The sharp white glare of the incandescent bulbs had dulled into a smudgy reddish glow. A subtle and inexplicable transformation had been wrought in his environment. The physical appearance of the things around him was not changed, yet the place seemed not the same. There were his books, the casket immediately on his left propped up on a flimsy scaffolding hastily nailed together to afford a more convenient view of

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the inscriptions; all these shapes well enough defined but enveloped in a peculiar haze which invested them with a mystifying glamour.

He felt this rather vaguely; he could not clearly reason it out or account for it.

Presently he looked up, listened. He imagined subconsciously that he heard a voice calling softly. In vain did he try to determine the sound; then gave it up and relapsed into his listless attitude. "Perhaps the night wind soughing through the foliage," he assured himself.

But again a whispering sound stole to his ears, hovering about him in the air, and he harkened anew. Gradually a vapor appeared just beyond the mummy-casket. It rose and grew. Dim at first, then waxing self-luminous with a pale phosphorescence resembling the wavy sheen of the polar light. The misty vapor took the shape of a woman clad in flowing garments closely nestling about her figure, a bared arm half raised. And Ormsley was conscious of a rich low voice.

"You have despoiled me of my own," that voice said, speaking with strange intonation, softly, yet in a tone of severe reproach. "My resting-place was desecrated by unclean hands. I bid you atone for the sacrilege. Restore that which is mine. Heed my command!" The figure lifted a finger in warning.

Ormsley stared like one transfixed. The uncanny dispensation impressed him profoundly, yet fear had no part in his emotions. For one moment he sat mute, his mental faculties slowly concentrating. But anon he felt impelled to reply.

Words did not flow glibly from his lips. "De-spoiled?" he repeated still half dreamily, his wondering gaze fixed immovably upon that strange vision. "Despoiled? I am not certain that I comprehend your meaning."

"You shall!" came back the answer. Her finger lowered, she pointed to the casket, and a ray of unearthly light diffusing from that slender hand illumined the painted image. At once the outlines of her figure grew more distinct and her features became clearly discernible. A face of rare beauty, the etherealized prototype of the portrait on the casket, met Ormsley's dazzled gaze!

"Do you *now* comprehend?" A pair of deep, lustrous, searching eyes rested on him with haughty grandeur, yet the entrancing loveliness of that marvelous face tempered the rigor of the glance.

Merwyn Ormsley started up, then sank back into his chair, his cheeks paling. "Menopteris!" he whispered under his breath.

Again the voice spoke: "Return it to its sacred place. And let no earthly hand defile it further!"

Ormsley rose with an effort. "I—I acquired it in good faith," he stammered excitedly. "It is my greatest treasure. I cannot part with it again!"

"Do as I bid you," the stern command was repeated, "or you will rue your disobedience!"

"But let me——"

An imperious hand thrown out: "Obey!" And instantly the spectral figure had vanished.

Ormsley made a movement forward as if he wanted to follow her, and his awkward arm jostled against the droplight. For an instant the electric bulbs flashed their sharp white glare; then, darkness. Through the tall windows the bleak moonlight streamed upon the casket and the chair in which Ormsley had been seated. He took a deep breath and brushed his hand over his heated forehead. His mind was in a whirl. He tried to turn on the droplight, but failed. Then, still in a daze, he groped for his hat, slowly made his way down the stairs and out of the building.

III

IT WAS close to noon when Merwyn Ormsley arrived at the Museum, unusually late for one who passed for a model of punctuality. After some hours of soundest sleep his morning had been spent in fruitless speculations as to the strange adventure of the previous night. He had racked his memory to trace the minutest details of that weird experience. Ormsley seemed perfectly able to recall every move, to remember each single spoken word. Still, he found himself unable to reach any conclusions.

Now, seated in his library, the setting of that weird scene before him, all things exactly in the places he had left them when he started for home, he sought once more for a reasonable physiological explanation. An hallucination due to overwrought nerves? Or a case of self-hypnotism? Or a nightmare? But he could trace none of the incongruities that always characterize night-

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mares, detect no object that might have induced self-hypnotism, even waiving the fact that he had never shown any susceptibilities in that direction. And certainly he had no symptoms of fever indicating a disturbance of his cerebral functions. His pulse was regular, his mind perfectly clear. It was puzzling in the extreme.

"Phantom?" He repeated the word half aloud. "Was it merely the creature of a disordered brain? Or a manifestation?" Ormsley asked himself. "I must have certainty on that point, if that is obtainable. I will——"

The rest of that sentence remained unspoken, for Professor Hillenbroeck, accompanied by a very charming young girl, ascended the iron staircase leading to the Egyptologist's secluded nook.

"At it again!" said the Professor as he hove in sight, blinking cheerfully. "What rare industry, Ormsley! The whole inscription deciphered by this time, I dare say? I brought Myra along. Told her about the wonderful acquisition. She is nearly as anxious as yourself to know all about it. Hey, Myra?"

"We are not disturbing you, Mr. Ormsley?" asked the girl. Her voice was sweet and ingratiating. "Father was so enthused about your new treasure that he disregarded all the precedents and consented to let me come along and invade these sacred precincts." There was the least suspicion of raillery in her tone, but she added quickly in perfect sincerity: "I am really very anxious to see it."

"Yes, Ormsley, I have to plead guilty," confirmed the Professor with a smile; "the responsibility for this rash act is on me. But if you don't mind, I will leave Myra in your charge and return to my own bailiwick. There are some matters I must attend to."

Merwyn Ormsley had risen in haste to greet the visitors. A flush of genuine pleasure, perhaps not entirely due to the amiable approval of his specialty, warmed his features as he extended a hand to the lovely girl.

"No one could be more welcome," he said impressively. "Your interest in my work is very flattering and I am entirely at your service, Miss Hillenbroeck. The precious object is before you." A gleam of proud satisfaction flashed in his eyes as he waved his hand toward the chest.

The pretty girl bent gracefully over the casket as Ormsley explained some striking features of the imagery. Suddenly Myra pointed to the head of the ancient portrait and exclaimed eagerly: "Oh, Mr. Ormsley, have you noticed this hair-ornament? Isn't it exactly like that gilded bronze pin in your collection? You remember you had some doubts as to its use when you brought it from Cairo. Don't you think it is perfectly clear now that the vanity of your Egyptian Princess ran to ornate hairpins?"

The young scientist gave a little start. At a glance he confirmed Miss Hillenbroeck's observation. "Strange that should not have occurred to me!" he murmured. Then he walked abruptly to a glass case in his library and took from it a gilded bronze bodkin of rather clumsy workmanship, the egg-shaped top-piece showing two small cavities, apparently made to hold precious stones which some greedy vandal had taken out.

He handed the bodkin to Myra. "This is what you had in mind? I believe you are right—it may have been used to fasten the braids at the back of the head, and my specimen certainly bears a striking resemblance to the one depicted here."

"It might be taken for its original if it were not for this blue stone," commented the girl, touching the ornament on the casket with her gloved hand. "It looks as though it were meant for a turquoise, doesn't it? Still, the artist may have added that detail to give it a prettier appearance."

Ormsley laughed. "The jewels may have been in the original; you observe these little cavities? I think you should devote yourself to the study of Egyptology, Miss Hillenbroeck; you would achieve amazing success. And I," he added in a tone which vibrated with deeper meaning, "should be most happy to have a charming assistant."

The faintest shade of pink flitted over her animated features and, dewy shyness veiling the eyes, Myra bent quickly down to the painted face as if to examine the object of their talk more closely. Presently she glanced up and said irrelevantly:

"I don't admire their style of beauty. There is something weird about these Egyptian faces. Perhaps the artist has failed to do her justice, but the expression of that mouth is not pleasing. I fear your ancient Princess had a very trying temper when she was alive."

"She didn't look that way at all; she was far more beautiful, her eyes somber but of

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wonderful depth, her smile entrancing!" he protested eagerly.

Myra looked at him in surprise: "How do you know that, Mr. Ormsley?" And the girl's eyes seemed to say: "Your vivid enthusiasm is not at all complimentary to *me!*"

The young man bit his lips, a hot wave mounting to his temples. "Oh, I—I simply —of course I guessed that," he stammered awkwardly. "You know pictures rarely reproduce the real expression, and in those times art was very primitive." Ormsley realized the lameness of his explanation and felt decidedly uncomfortable.

Myra Hillenbroeck made no further comment. His behavior mystified and piqued her.

"I have taken too much of your time, Mr. Ormsley." She smoothed her gloves and picked up the parasol, preparatory to leaving.

"Oh, don't, Miss Hillenbroeck," he interposed pleadingly. "I am only too happy to be of service to you. I——"

A little gleam of whimsical satisfaction danced in her eyes: "Sorry, Mr. Ormsley, but I must go. I have some shopping to do and I want to speak to father a minute." A wave of a daintily gloved hand and she swished downstairs. But a tiny lace handkerchief was left behind. It lay unnoticed on the foot-end of the mummy-casket.

Merwyn Ormsley stood rooted to the spot. He ran his fingers a couple of times through his obstreperous blond thatch and gave the forehead a sound whack with his palm: "Idiot!" he burst out. "Serves me right, though. Why can't I keep control of my thoughts! I am bound to have a serious falling out with the loveliest girl in Washington, am I? And all on account of this——"

He was about to say "witch," but swallowed the word. But then, the spell gripped him anew and he fell to musing. Finally he pulled himself together and said with determination: "I must find a solution, one way or another. If that was simply an illusion, well and good. But if there is something more to it— Yes, that's the thing. I'll test old man Hillenbroeck's invention!" And he left the building to go to his dinner.

IV

RETURNING to the Museum some hours later, Ormsley gave orders at the entrance that only the east wing should be lighted for the night, as he was engaged in some important experiments; he further enjoined upon the watchman that he must in no wise be disturbed in his work.

On the way to his own abode he halted at Professor Hillenbroeck's room. The door was ajar and he glanced in. There, in the corner, was the closet where the Professor kept his scientific paraphernalia. For one brief moment he hesitated. Then he stepped firmly to the closet, took a bunch of keys from his pocket and tried several of them.

It was an ordinary lock and he soon found one of his own keys to fit it. The glass door yielded with a little creak and straight before him he saw the steel vial which contained the great *materia magica.* Right close to it were several photographic plates covered by a thin, filmy coating, quite ready to be placed in a camera.

Ormsley's eyes sparkled with excitement. "Everything handy for use," he murmured. "I am lucky indeed!" And without further ado he took vial and plates, locked the closet and rapidly ascended the stairs to the gallery.

When he reached his library night had almost set in. He deposited his treasure on the table near the casket and turned the knob of the electric droplight, but to no purpose; no glow resulted. Then he remembered his orders to the watchman; evidently the whole switchboard had been turned off in mistaken compliance with his wish. He had intended to read while he was waiting for developments. What now? Groping about in the darkness he found some candles which he kept in his desk for an emergency. "I'll have to make them do," he said to himself, and by the dim light of a candle, propped up cleverly in an empty inkwell, he perfected his preparations.

First he selected the most advantageous places for the neutralized plates so that he could not fail to get an impression no matter where the vision might appear. When that was arranged to his satisfaction Ormsley took a small flat china plate from his pocket, set it on the table and opened the vial. Remembering the Professor's warning as to the deadly, poisonous qualities of the substance, he cast about for a means of transferring some of it from the vial to the china dish and his eyes fell on the bodkin which had not been put back into the collection.

"The very thing," he laughed softly,

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"and if my prospective visitor is halfway amiable I shall offer it as ransom for the casket. She may be willing to compromise, for fair ladies are notoriously partial to trinkets."

His laugh sounded strangely hollow, and its echo seemed somehow to linger in the air. Ormsley looked up and an uncomfortable feeling stole over him. But he shook it off and continued his preparations. Making use of the bodkin, he transferred a small quantity of the corridium to the little china dish and placed that in such a way that the rays must reach every one of the plates. Instantly the yellowish substance began to show the very faintest traces of irdescence, and Ormsley contemplated this development with curious satisfaction.

"It is working," he muttered. "The rays are in process of evolution. All I need now is the object!"

The young scientist settled down in his swivel chair, prepared for his vigil. A long, dreary wait. The candle was being slowly consumed while his thoughts soared to dizzy heights, and now the flickering, spluttering flame had nearly crept down to the brim of the inkwell. Ormsley rose to supply a fresh candle and bent over the table, half turning around, when a sudden whiff of breeze from the open window extinguished the flame and left him in utter darkness.

Presently a phosphorescent glimmer irradiated the gloom. Supposing that the corridium had undergone an unexpected chemical transformation, Ormsley turned quickly and — faced the vision of the previous night, glowering at him from beyond the table!

A demoniacal change had come over the erstwhile serene beauty of the spectral features; the limpid eyes glittered viciously and the lines of the mouth were curved in cruel malice. In her hand the bodkin pointed straight at the foot of the casket; uncanny rays effusing from the edges of the dagger-like ornament brought a crumpled little lace handkerchief into clear relief.

"Traitor!" Her wrathful voice made him shudder involuntarily. "You have disobeyed. Suffer punishment!" The spectral Princess raised her hand and a blinding flash struck his eyes.

With a cry of intense pain, his hands clutching the temples, Merwyn Ormsley staggered, lurched forward and fell face downward on the casket, bearing it down with him, in a crash, to the floor, the flimsy scaffolding yielding under the forceful impact.

V

VERY early on the following morning Professor Hillenbroeck was summoned to the Museum by a telephone message which made his blood run cold. Merwyn Ormsley had been found dead on the gallery tier in front of his own library.

Half an hour later he bent grief-stricken over the rigid body of his young assistant lying face down on the splintered wreck of the mummy-casket, the bodkin of Menopteris embedded an inch deep in his right temple! Feverishly excited, the Professor examined the wound, and a peculiar greenish discoloration at the edges made him start. A quick glance at the table near by, and his suspicion was confirmed. He saw a small china dish with the remnant of a thick yellowish substance, and alongside of it the steel vial containing his corridium.

Hillenbroeck stared in silent horror at this discovery. It explained the discoloration of the wound; Ormsley had clandestinely experimented with that great invention and then, for some unexplained reason, committed suicide by inflicting a wound with that ancient bodkin dipped in corridium! Death must have claimed him instantaneously.

Now thoroughly aroused, the Professor made further search and detected three of his sensitive, neutralized plates, oddly arranged at different angles on either side of the casket. He scrutinized them carefully. A hoarse exclamation of mingled surprise and terror escaped from his lips.

For one of the plates showed in faint tracings the figure of a woman in ancient Egyptian attire, one hand outstretched, her features contorted into an expression of vicious rage. And the face bore an unmistakable resemblance to that of the painted mummy on the casket!

"It is proven!" he muttered awe-stricken. "He has demonstrated the truth, but the shock of the great new light was too powerful for him—his nerves were not equal to the strain. My theory established beyond a doubt! But heaven save us—at what awful sacrifice!"

Tears trickling into his gray beard, the old man sank groaning into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

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The Tragedy of Winky Wanky Woo

By Minnie Milne

THUNDERING applause! One—two—three curtain-calls. Bravo! Bravo! Pepita! Pepita! Five, six, seven, eight curtains; flowers in showers; a gradual hush; the orchestra, and then—Pepita, making a wild dash for her dressing-room, followed by the Signor.

Signor Winky Wanky Woo, he of the fiery Italian eyes, dark hair and French figure, had a penchant for all the ladies, but especially admired the dancer. He loved to play with her shimmering hair (which recalled rambles through long, scented grasses) or—epitome of delight—pull and jerk and pull again certain long white strings which held the lady's petticoat intact. She did not lack maidenly reserve, but was often too tired, always too fond to remonstrate. Vaudeville life is monotonous, lonely, and the Signor was her best friend.

To a certain degree their lives ran in parallels. Both were orphans, nomads and artists. Pepita, reaping the benefit of a long line of paternal and maternal vaudevillers, burst forth a flower of grace and loveliness. Signor Winky Wanky Woo could boast only a one-sided hereditary glory. His mother, her mother, the latter's great-grandmother were high-salaried circus artistes. The fathers were—well, slightly known quantities, but fathers don't count for much anyway.

La Pepita was a hit. The Signor shared honors. It was a pretty act called "The Orchid," and weekly shuffled eight hundred dollars from the managerial pocket into La Pepita's boodle-bag.

At the rise of the curtain a wonderful lavender bud unfolded its petals, yielded its stamens, and in its heart of hearts revealed La Pepita, who instantly left her flowery swaddling-clothes and pirouetted into the souls of all men. After a fairy dance, she seized a mammoth champagne-bottle, pulled the cork and—out skipped the Signor—a tiny black poodle, the most cock-sure, conceited bit of dog-flesh imaginable. He graciously bowed to his audience, turned double somersaults till he was out of breath, and then sang a whiny, barky love-song.

Pepita floated, scintillated like wind-chased down, but was adamant to all entreaties, until Winky Wanky Woo grasped a big prop. part in his teeth and laid it, glowing red, at her feet. The appeal was too much. She seized the little creature in her arms and nestled him against her bosom.

Pepita took the first curtain-call alone. Winky toddled on his hind legs for the second. At the third round of applause the dancer came forward with her fellow artist perched on her shoulder. He had not read Emerson's "Compensation," but his glowing eyes and demonstrative tail undoubtedly said, "It's rather fine being a dog, isn't it?"

Even canine honors are short-lived. Curtains will drop, and—who knows?—it might be palling to perch eternally on a soubrette's alabaster shoulder.

"Trunks, trunks!" howled the baggage-man. "Train for Chicago leaves in an hour!"

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La Pepita hastily flung things into boxes and trays, all to the nervous accompaniment of the Signor's barks.

"Winky, hush! Stop pulling my skirts!"

"*Bow, wow, wow!*" being interpreted—"Can't a fellow celebrate on a salary-night?"

"We'll be late and lose our Chicago date. Winky, jump into your bag!"

He was nothing if not professional. In a twinkling he disappeared, snap went the clasp and nothing was visible but a most conservative-looking bag carried by a demure maiden.

"You're late, Pepita, and you'd better get a move on you," called the back-door man. "Hand over your stuff—the hat-box, the grip and the umbrellas. Here, get out of the way, you Johnnies; ye can get standing-room in front for a quarter. Taxi, Twenty-third Street—Pennsylvania Depot, and go it as if you'd run over a policeman. You hit 'em hard this time, Pepita."

"*Yip, yip!*"

"Winky, don't get gay. You're not the only purp in the show business. Muldoon's bulldog has you beat on the somersault. Good-by! Good luck to you! Go it, Taxi."

The Taxi went the limit. Pepita caught the last ferryboat, but in her wild dash upset two children and knocked off a clergyman's hat.

"I beg pardon."

"Oh, it's nothing; let me carry your bag and the hat-box," said the minister.

"You certainly are a Christian," said Pepita.

"Well, you see, it's my business."

"But, you see, we do not all attend to our business."

"You mean I may not carry the things?"

"Please do; I have only a moment to catch the train."

"You go to Chicago?"

"Yes."

"So do I."

"Oh!"

"I'm train No. 8."

"So am I," replied Pepita.

Meanwhile the box was carried upside-down, much to the detriment of the bonnet, and poor Winky Wanky Woo was being swung about like an Indian-club. His canine thoughts were not fit to print, but he had learned the value of silence. Remonstrance might mean relegation to the baggage-car. It takes more than instinct to distinguish a railroad official from a priest.

Pepita, umbrellas, boxes and the Signor finally settled down in Section 10. Winky curled up at his mistress's feet and forgot spangles and his late indignities. The dancer sighed wearily. "The bags were heavy—it was nice to have them carried." She turned on the electric light and peeped into the hat-box. "Yes, I *thought* the aigrette would be broken. Seven dollars!" Another sigh. "But the minister must be a bachelor or he wouldn't have carried it upside-down. I wonder what he thinks of the stage. Oh, I'm so tired, tired, tired and homesick—if I *had* a home. Good-night, Winky."

"*Yip, yip!*"

The curtain rang down on Lower 10.

Socialism, electric lights and pajamas make all men equal. The Rev. William Curtis, in Lower 9, shorn of a button in the back collar, looked like any layman and thought the thoughts of most travelers.

"Beastly warm! How do they expect a fellow to sleep? Porter!"

"Yas, sah."

"Can't you open the ventilators, it's hot——"

"Yas, sah; I know, but de lady 'cross de way done say she's froze. I 'low I ain't got as much respec' fo' nothin' as fo' de church, less'n 'tis de ladies. I shu' is complexed."

"Which lady complained? The young pretty one with brown eyes, yellow hair, long fur coat, chinchilla muff and old blue toque, who carried two bags, one box and two umbrellas?"

"You's pow'ful observin' fo' a parson. Dat's de party, sah. How 'bout de ventilators?"

"Close the ventilators. Give the lady this blanket and stop grinning. Nothing funny about two persons having a difference of opinion about the thermometer, is there?"

"No, sah; I reckon dat's de mos' tragical part of a porter's profession, sah. P'raps you'd like a ice-bag to compromise, sah?" Another display of white teeth.

"Here, take this blanket and don't call me until eight."

The porter disappeared, chuckling over a generous tip and the frailties of the church.

The Rev. Mr. Curtis was sleepless, perspiring from altruism. "You certainly are a Christian." He smiled as he recalled

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Pepita's words. "I like humor in a woman —especially in a woman with such eyes. I wonder what was in that black bag—it rolled about like a cannon-ball!" Down fell the curtain on the ecclesiastic's momentous wonder.

Panoramic pictures of night, framed by car windows, sped through the hours and, when at last morning dawned, amateur travelers and elderly ladies emerged from their berths spick and span as new-born moths. At the last call for breakfast the blasé crept out in all sorts of multicolored befrazzlement, and, simultaneously, Pepita and Mr. Curtis rushed toward the diner. The car lurched, and the dancer was received on the bosom of the church, which edifice toppled into the nearest seat and crushed a silk hat.

"It's getting to be a habit, isn't it?" said Pepita.

"What—your heretical disregard for my cloth?"

"No; your hat iconoclasm."

"You don't mean to say I spoiled your hat yesterday?"

Further schism was prevented by the voice of the porter: "Jes two seats left in de diner, side by each, las' table to yo' right."

"Still happy, I see, George," observed Mr. Curtis.

"Yas, sah; ef yo' don' grin in de mornin' fo' nothin's done happen, yo' might lose yo' chance fo' de day." Another grin, another tip, exit porter.

La Pepita found it embarrassing to breakfast with a stranger. A ministerial collar made a breach of dignity sacerdotal. They had coffee and rolls and were exactly an hour at the table.

The Signor was getting hungry and desperate to the point of a smothered whimper.

"Bettah hush up," George remonstrated. "How does yo' know I ain't a spottah?"

"*Bow, wow, wow, wow!*"

"Oh, yo' ain't no common ki-yi, is yo'? Yo' ain't been over dis road fo' de las' six years without knowin' yo' friends, is yo'?"

A rustle of silk petticoats, a faint perfume—La Pepita.

"Winky mighty nigh smothered, miss. Let him out—no one on de kyar objec'. Papers say yo'all make a big hit!"

"*Sh, sh*, George. I'm not La Pepita, but Miss Lucina Lane. Tell the conductor and the other men. You understand?"

He tucked a bill in his vest pocket: "Yas, Miss Lucina, I's on, but I wouldn't pine away, ef I was yo'. De's a Actor's Church Alliance, ain't dey?"

"*Sh, sh!*"

Mr. Curtis was diverted from his book by a sharp, happy yelp. The mystery of the black bag was solved and an excuse offered for crossing to Lower 10.

"I'm not a bromide, but what a pretty dog. What is his name?"

"Winky Wanky Woo."

"Mrs. Patrick Campbell, I believe, has one called Pinky Panky Poo."

"Mrs. Patrick who?" queried La Pepita innocently.

"Why, Campbell, the English actress. Haven't you seen her? No? Just as well. I don't approve of young girls going to the theater."

Pepita's heart sank. He continued:

"Perhaps you're a Methodist?"

"No, I'm not."

The poodle was jealous and in order to break up the tête-à-tête, jumped into the aisle and waltzed on his hind legs.

"Evidently Winky wished to show me he's not a Methodist," observed the minister, smiling.

"Lie down, Winky! Stop!" pleaded Pepita. But the Signor was a typical actor—give him an audience and he would talk shop. Genius burned. He turned double somersaults the full length of the car and back again, and was about to do his vaudeville stunt, when the porter, realizing the crisis, appeared with a mutton-chop, which Winky seized with avidity. Not that he loved art less, but his mistress had forgotten to give him his breakfast.

"Dat poodle shu' has a memory, Miss Lane. Three years ago, wahn't it, yo'all was on dis very same kyar, and dat fool circus clown done leave his trick dog in de upper berth."

"Two years ago, George."

"Shu, miss, I ain't as much recollection as dis yer poodle. I reckon de motion ob de train done jiggle up de brain."

La Pepita, still incognito, sighed in grateful relief and sank down by the minister. They talked of dogs, of the Ladies' Aid Society, of things in general, but by lunch-time had reached the personal. A sort of predigested, concentrated friendship seems prevalent on Pullmans.

Winky was conservative and did not

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approve. He insisted on sitting between La Pepita and Mr. Curtis. At times he was squeezed a bit, but he stuck to his post of duty.

Of course, they had luncheon together. George saw that the poodle had another chop, but a dog can't live by meat alone. Every hour things waxed worse. The minister seemed absolutely oblivious of the fact that he belonged in Lower 9. Winky endeavored to call him to his senses by nipping his elbows. As a reward the Rev. Mr. Curtis sat on his tail, and when the Signor yelped in indignant pain La Pepita boxed his ears. But life is full of misunderstood motives.

Meanwhile, George returned. He hadn't had a tip for three hours: "Miss Lucina, kin I speak with you one second?"

Mr. Curtis retired, pursued by Winky, who bit his ankles until he reached the smoker.

"Miss Pepita," continued the porter, "I has a idea de church ain't strong for high skirts, and de news-agent done turn up wid de las' edition of de *Dramatic Mirror*. De's a full-length picture of yo'all on de front page."

"Oh, George, quick, quick—here's a five-dollar bill—buy every copy! Hustle!"

"Lord, yas; watch me, missy. Yo' ain't gwine ter see my feet fo' de dust!"

Given a powder-puff and an old cult in a new dress, and a woman will face any storm. La Pepita was a true daughter of Eve. She powdered her nose and read "In Tune with the Infinite" until Mr. Curtis appeared.

"You've been away a long time," she observed.

"It seemed an hour, but it was only ten minutes, by my watch."

"According to that reckoning, this slow train must have been unendurable."

"No, adorable. We're already two hours late, and still losing time. Isn't it great?"

"Oh, charming. I love the scenery."

"Yes, I suppose a young girl enjoys the novelty of travel. But come, won't you have dinner with me?"

The Signor was once more left in hungry solitude, while his mistress and his bitter enemy toyed over a planked steak. Oh, the joy of that last little dinner together! And later when they sat in Lower 10 and watched the purple shadows deepen into night—well, the Episcopal divine changed his orthodox views of heaven.

"Miss Lane, you're a star!" he whispered.

"Oh, no—no—I'm only——" she gasped in utter terror. Had he guessed the truth?

"I mean, dear, your eyes—they are so brilliant!"

"You only see the reflection of your own," she replied limply.

Winky was curled up on the opposite seat, but he slept with one eye open, looking for trouble. He found it.

The minister grasped the girl's hand. She, conscientiously, pulled it away. He, Winky, bounded across the aisle and bit the Rev. William Curtis's ear. How did a stranger dare annoy his mistress! The latter grabbed her co-star by the nape of the neck, put him in the black bag and snapped the lock.

"You look worried, Mr. Curtis. You won't have hydrophobia."

He was wild to kiss and blot out the smiles that played kitty-corner with her dimples. Instead he murmured: "It isn't that, but one can't be like you—always merry."

"Oh, I'm not always merry. One can have everything and nothing, Mr. Curtis; at least, Winky and I have found it so."

"But you can't deny that you love the everything—flowers and strawberries in December, furs, perfume and hats?"

He waited in awful suspense. He couldn't ask a society woman to marry him unless he could make her happy on a clergyman's salary.

"I could do without the strawberries and flowers until June."

"But the furs?"

"Oh, my coat only cost two weeks' salary—sixteen hundred." She gasped after her *faux pas* and added, "You—you see, uncle is very generous."

Sixteen hundred dollars!

"Your uncle is——?"

She hesitated a moment—then recalled the blessed relative of the entire theatrical profession, whose insignia is three golden balls, and, smiling, replied: "President of the Provident Loan Association."

Mr. Curtis waxed silent, hopeless. With such a convenient uncle it would be still a greater imposition to ask Miss Lane to join him in gathering the wheat and reforming the tares.

La Pepita gazed out of the window until her head was a forest of whirling trees.

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"I'm very sleepy, Mr. Curtis; if you'll excuse me, I'll retire."

"But, I'll see you in the morning?" he asked.

"No, uncle will meet me. I get off at one of the suburbs."

For a moment their eyes met.

"Miss Lane, these thirty-six hours have been the happiest of my life. Good-by, and I wish you to have not everything and nothing, but all the luxury and real happiness too—you understand, dear?"

"Yes, Mr. Curtis, and I'm glad you carried the hat even if you broke the aigrette," she answered and disappeared in Lower 10.

Broken-hearted women are like porcupines. They curl up in impregnable balls. La Pepita, lost in a tangle of golden hair, sobbed until a faint "*bow-wow*" reached her ears.

"Winky, my poor little Winky Wanky Woo!" Humiliated, but not repentant, the Signor crept close, close to his mistress.

"It's all over, Winky, and it was sweet—so, so sweet!"

Her tears rained on his nose. He shook his head and yipped: "I wish I'd bitten his ear off, but it's no use crying over spilled milk."

The Rev. William Curtis turned on his electric light and read, or didn't read, until dawn.

At the Majestic Theater, Chicago, the next evening at nine-thirty the voice of the call-boy rang out, "La Pepita, next act!"

Signor Winky Wanky Woo raced to the stage and, while waiting for the preceding turn to ring down, stood on his hind legs and deigned to accept the homage of fellow artists. He kissed a soubrette's hand, wagged his tail at a clown, but stiffly turned his back on a trained monkey. One has to draw the line somewhere, even when one is consciously democratic.

Chicago liked the act. It was going with remarkable gusto, when suddenly La Pepita glanced toward the wings. No—it couldn't be possible—her head swam! Yes! there stood the Rev. William Curtis, inflexible, grim! Her fate hung in the balance. The beating of her heart outstripped and deadened the orchestra, but she danced. Bravos were only hisses, flowers stung like drifting sleet. There he stood disapproving, unmoved—still she danced.

Signor Winky Wanky Woo saw him, turned a "front-foot" somersault to the first entrance, removed the clocks from his rival's hose and returned to the center of the stage, smiling, and danced. It's an everyday tragedy—the stage smile.

At last the kindly curtain fell. Pepita, pale, trembling, confronted the minister.

"You belong to the Actors' Church Alliance, don't you?" She held out an appealing little hand.

"Yes, I belong to the Alliance, and I don't object to your art, but——"

"The lie—the horrible lie—that's what you can't forgive?"

He nodded. Her lips trembled. A tear—two tears—a long procession of sparkling drops fell over the spangles.

The church, recognizing true repentance, was holding the sinner's hand, when the stage-manager roughly tapped Mr. Curtis on the shoulder and observed:

"Say, Bill, it's near your act. Cut it short there!"

La Pepita fell against the wings and gasped, "You're—you're not——"

"No, I'm not." His eyes had a secular twinkle. "Moreover, we have the same uncle. I'm an actor—am playing the part of a minister—was late for my train in New York and had to skip in my make-up. Oh, Pepita, you were adorable in furs, but I can't do without you in spangles! Will you marry me after the performance?"

She smiled through her tears. "But I'm so disappointed! I had hoped to be headliner in the Ladies' Aid Society!"

At this momentous moment Signor Winky Wanky Woo turned and saw his mistress crushed in the arms of the enemy. Things had gone too far. He knew the point where remonstrance ceased to be a virtue. La Pepita was his no longer, but he still had his art.

"Winky, Winky,"—the voice of the victor.

"Winky, Winky," the beloved one called.

No response. The Signor was under the bunch-light, turning triple somersaults that surpassed the records of any dog on the vaudeville circuit.

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The Survival of the Fittest

by Thomas P. Byron

THIS story was told me once—with variations—on a steamer reeking with exiguous officialdom and Gouanese, on the Victoria Nyanza between Port Florence and Jinja by a man who has actually slain more lions than most men would care to lie about. He swore that it was true and that it had taken place in the Taru Desert.

It was told me again with other variations by an imaginative Boer with whom I drove from Mafeking to Zeerust to take train to Jo'burg. He likewise swore that it was true and that it had taken place in Bechuanaland.

It is thus that the truth becomes a lie and history a legend. For the story is easy of adoption. All that is needed is a desert and a lion—slaves are plentiful everywhere.

It is an elemental story—the stage, the characters and the struggle are all elemental, and I heard it once, told in its elemental simplicity—in the Sahara where it happened and where they tell it yet in the tents of the Ouled Abdul Kerin.

It was told me in a hundred words; I will need some thousands for the retelling, for there stage, color and atmosphere were spread before me like an open book, in horizon-bounded nakedness.

I

NO SUCCESSFUL military career was ever begun by kicking a secretary of war up and down a parade-ground under the eyes of his astonished soldiers. Yet that is what Sam Ames did in Monrovia, and down Liberia-way they speak of Gen'ral Sam yet, for in his day the "'Mer'can niggahs" didn't dare stick their noses outside of the four ports of Monrovia, Grand Bassa, Sinou and

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Cape Palmas. The rest of the country was Sam's.

Monrovia is a queer place—save for its plentitude of churches, like nothing in the world so much as a village lifted bodily out of the Georgia black-belt and slapped down on the West African coast.

Sam Ames had formerly been in the Twenty-Fifth U. S. Infantry, which was the reason of his uproarious laughter at the drill of the Liberian troops; which was the reason of the silk-hatted, dignity-drenched Secretary of War rebuking Sam in high-brow verbal incomprehensibility; which was the reason of Sam's getting sore and kicking the dignity and stuffing out of the incumbent of the war-portfolio; which was the reason of the tremendous row that forced Sam to run away into the bush with the balls whizzing about his ears.

Sam was a sort of by-product of the city of New Orleans, where he was universally respected for his blackness, and was remarkable in many ways—chiefly for plying simultaneously a trade, a profession and an art.

I must dilate a bit. Sam worked occasionally—which was a trade; he stole frequently—which was a profession; he sold his dreams to policy-playing negroes, which was surely an art—that is, the dreaming and not the selling. Besides disposing of visions of flying elephants with pink eyelashes and forty-four sets of false teeth set row on row—like a Maracaibo crocodile's—which a policy player readily translated into a hunch to play a pink ticket numbered forty-four, Sam played the banjo and sang, especially one song that, be it hummed in the wheeze of a fragmentary-lunged phthisic, still echoes with the tramp of feet and the rattle of drums and crash of musketry. And at night he watched the stars and the lights of Algiers across the great river and dreamed—dreamed always of something that hurt him deep when he got to thinking about it, something he could not name or hear or see. But oh, how he could feel it!

Some of Sam's military service was spent against the Sioux—excellent judges of men, being men themselves—who gave him a guttural name that meant "The Singing Buffalo-Soldier Who Fights like Ten with the Left Hand," and it was in the smoke of his second discharge that he was shanghaied from a saloon on Elysian Fields Avenue into the forecastle of an English barque for Liverpool.

Her next voyage was down the African coast with some three thousand, five hundred cases of gin, ten or twelve cases of Bibles and other similar knick-knacks destined for the spiritual welfare of the benighted. At Monrovia Sam went ashore, full of strange thoughts and excitement at the idea of a *black* republic.

When he ran into the bush after the Secretary of War episode, a few miles out of town a Kru-boy took a pot-shot at him from under a thorn-bush with a seven-foot flintlock loaded with four or five ounces of pebbles and scraps of iron. The charge whistled over Sam's head, the recoil half-killed the Kru, Sam made him a captive and marched him away into the bush where he, Sam, put the blue mark of a Kru on his forehead, took a Kru-girl to wife, lived upon chicken and okra-broth and amused himself by potting "'Mer'can niggahs" and trading their belongings to British and German schooners for flints and kegs of powder.

At times he dreamed of real guns with bayonets on the ends of them and of drilling his gang of bushwhackers——

But things happened, not to his discredit, that drove him from Liberia, which is another story.

Two years later he was a slave in the Oasis of Oudaghir, that lies lost in the Sahara like a needle in a haystack, on the fringe of Tafilet, where the Sheik of the Ouled Abdul Kerin is the faint, far echo of the power of his Sherifian Majesty the Sultan of Morocco.

II

THE five slaves of El-Achiri were carrying clay bricks from the river-bed where they were made to where the sheik was building his new *kasba* on the crest of the tiny hill. They were chained together, the chain welded on their heavy iron neck-rings with a six-foot interval between them, and while the first and last plodded on in a sort of tireless, sullen rage under the grilling sun, the three in the middle were prone to linger a bit in the shade of the covered streets, the two Berbers through habit and fatigue, the Senegalese from cunning.

They were slaves such as had never been seen before in Oudaghir, and the children of the Abdul Kerin, sitting armed and half-asleep in the doorways of their houses, regarded them with grave curiosity, especially the last, who had in his mien something

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mysterious and baffling that was foreign to men of the desert and puzzled even philosophers and judges of men, such as the Ouled Abdul Kerin.

In the *Soko* a green-turbaned *Hadji* sat in the little open mosque in the midst of a *medersa* of young priests.

"Consider the five slaves of El-Achiri," he said to the others who hung upon the words that fell from his lips. "The first is from beyond the Great Desert. Saw one ever so great or so black a man! His face is hideous, yet intelligent, and with all his strength he is a poor slave, for lo! his eye, even when he cringes under the lash, is furious. Some day he will rebel and then he will have to be killed.

"And the second comes from the country of Senegal—he is tall and slim and wears the cheek-gashes of his nation. He is a good slave but one that must be watched. He is treacherous and cunning and is one that would bide his time and await the opportunity of rebellion for years.

"The third and fourth are Berbers—strong men and good slaves—they represent strength bent to obedience by intelligence.

"And the last! Never—and I have crossed the Great Desert—have I seen a black man such as this. His face is that of the Senegalese—yet he has no face-marks nor is he slim, but of a bulging muscularity of limb and a heaviness of body such as the Roumi is. Beyond doubt he comes from a far and unknown land—surely very, very far away."

All Oudaghir marveled at the last slave. As a matter of fact some generations before his ancestors *had* been Senegalese. For he was none other than Sam Ames, and the thing that puzzled the Arabs was the stamp of civilization.

From the top of the hill where they emptied their baskets and rested for a moment, the whole Oasis of Oudaghir lay beneath them—a wilderness of ten thousand date-palms that gave life to the Ouled Abdul Kerin and their herds and screened a maze of high-walled paths where the open irrigation canals shone dully and the seven huddled *ksars* of low flat-roofed houses washed a faint blue, with here and there a tiny garden of fruit-trees, the crowning glory of which was always a white fountain under a magnificent *beloum*.

All about the desert stretched, stark and absolute and blinding yellow under the fierce glare of the sun. It never lay still or dead, but palpitated under a thin, luminous veil of bubbling heat. The slightest breath of air caught up minute particles of sand and sent them flowing slowly along the horizon like a rippling river. The red-gold sand-dunes that had been piled up by the sirocco a mile or so away, and even the herds of camels pastured before them took on clear and tremulous outlines through this curtain, and a distant, isolated range of the Atlas that was stamped like a heavy amethyst silhouette against the clear blue of the northwestern sky seemed to undulate over the haze like a great ship riding a long, glassy swell.

Each time that they stood on the hill the Soudanese, the first slave, had stared tensely toward the mountain range, and Sam Ames had followed the direction of his gaze. This time for a moment the quivering veil seemed to hang still and motionless, and through its meshes Sam saw a *ksar* of gray houses that stood like ghosts on the crest of a red hill. He uttered an exclamation, the eye of the Soudanese burned into his, and then the lash of El-Achiri fell upon them both as he drove them down the hill.

But in the brief instant that they had seen the mirage Sam and the Soudanese had understood each other. And the Senegalese had seen and understood both.

That afternoon El-Achiri gave each of the slaves a *burnoose* of coarse white cloth to don and then drove them through the *palmeraie* and across the river-bed. Sam, who had been sold only the day before by the caravan that had brought him from the south, did not understand, but the others knew that they were going out on the plateau beyond the sand-dunes to gather firewood and that they would remain there all night and return in the morning.

One of the Berbers carried a great water-skin that they filled at the pool in the *oued* and the Senegalese bore a skin of dates. They crossed the intervening pasture and climbed the dunes.

These were in some places as much as one hundred feet high. They found their background against the wall of the plateau and had been wrought by the sirocco into a miniature mountain-world of peaks and valleys that could be climbed and crossed in a dozen paces. The sand was extremely dry and mobile and the footing very uncertain.

They had well nigh reached the plateau

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when the Soudanese stumbled clumsily and fell into a deep rift, pulling the Senegalese down upon him. At the moment of his fall he flung a glance of deep meaning at Sam, who took a hurried look about and saw that they were effectually screened from view by the sand hills. El-Achiri stood some distance behind, plying his long-lashed whip upon the fallen slaves, and Sam, with a tigerlike leap, was upon him, clutched his *burnoose* and rolled him dexterously in an avalanche of sand down upon the two below.

El-Achiri would have screamed, but Sam's hands ground his face into the sand; he would have drawn his knife, but the Soudanese had forestalled him, drawing it and driving it into the slave-driver's breast with a single motion.

They untangled themselves, the three negroes panting fiercely, the Berbers pale under their brown skins. El-Achiri lay still.

The Soudanese growled a word, the Berbers and the Senegalese began to scoop out the sand in the bottom of the rift. Sam, understanding, followed suit. The Soudanese stripped the clothes from the dead man, put the sling for the knife about his own neck and examined the long fusil, the stock of which had been broken in the fall.

In a couple of minutes they had scooped out a hole into which they tumbled the slave-driver's body with the fragments of the broken gun, and they threw sand over it in great double handfuls until it was covered to the depth of three feet. The Berbers tossed great handfuls of sand into the air, the dead man's garments flapped by the other two drove the dry, fine stuff like chaff over the grave, and in a moment all trace of the grave, of human handiwork and of the struggle was obliterated.

The Senegalese took up the bag of dates, Sam seized the water-skin and they climbed up the dunes to the plateau beyond. Sam took a backward glance. The mobile, dry, infinitesimal sand sought its level like water, and on the sloping surface their footprints were obliterated almost instantly by the mere force of gravity. A hundred yards from the foot of the dunes sat an Arab who guarded the camels, but his back was toward them. Across the desert the deep green of the oasis shone like a cluster of emeralds in a dish of blazing gold.

They marched quickly out on the plateau, which was quite deserted, and Oudaghir dropped from sight.

The plateau was of red sandstone, cut with deep rifts and swept bare in spots by the sirocco. Beyond it could be seen an undulating plain where grew occasional clumps of grass and withered bushes. They marched forward rapidly and steadily, occasionally turning to glance about, and it was not until sundown that they stopped while the Soudanese tried, with the long knife, each and every link in the chains that held them together. The chain, however, was too thick and strong to be broken.

They sat in a circle in one of the undulations of the plain and ate and drank very sparingly. The Soudanese spoke only once and briefly, pointing toward the northwest and back again toward Oudaghir. The others nodded. Even Sam, who could not comprehend a word, understood. They were safe from pursuit, since the body of El-Achiri could not be discovered, and they were to march to the *ksar* that he had seen from the hill that morning. Since they could not break their chains, they must needs cross the desert shackled together.

The sun set with a splendor that strewed the western horizon with the flaming scenery of gorgeous and impossible lands, and a half-hour later the moon rose at its full and the desert gleamed like a sea of quicksilver, strewn with fantastic isles where each tree and bush took on a weird disproportion in the white light.

The Soudanese rose to his feet, gave Sam the water-skin, the dates to the Senegalese, slipped out of his *burnoose* and started, the rest following unquestioningly.

It was a grotesque and uncanny procession—four tall, white ghosts led by a naked colossus of ebon, marching over a white and desolate vastness to the unearthly clanking of their chains, under a sky that flamed with constellations and was shot and streaked with lines of fire by the shooting stars that fell countlessly and incessantly.

Sam Ames felt strong and exultant; his chains had ceased to gall, for he was free—free—free, although shackled to four others in a shadowless land where the sun burned the very blood in man's veins, where there was neither food nor water nor refuge.

They marched on steadily and presently Sam began to sing. It was a song that had brought strength to the limbs and valor to the hearts of wearied armies, a song that a beaten, outnumbered cause had bequeathed to its conquerors to thrill the hearts of a

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nation in a generation to come, and at its meaningless words the five slaves—pitiful atoms crawling across a pitiless cosmos—marched to its tune and bore their chains proudly. Sam sang it loftily over and over:

"In a southern land I'll take my stand
And live and die in Dixie!"

From time to time he stared up at the stars. He had heard once that they were worlds like ours, and he stared at them curiously—the countless thousands that streamed slowly across the sky. Never had they shone so bright, never had there been so many of them, and it seemed to him that they gazed back at him in unwinking amaze—that the whole heavens were passing in review to marvel at the lonely five that crept across the desert.

Hours had passed, and they were marching amongst small clumps of withered bushes when a terrible thing happened.

From behind a bush a vast monster came through the air like a catapult, with a thunderous snarl that seemed to shatter the silence and set all the desert to tingling and vibrating with din. The thing struck the first Berber, a tremendous jerk on the ring at his neck brough Sam to his knees as a scream echoed—and then he was on his feet running swiftly across the desert after the others, his heart pounding fiercely at his breast, the precious water-skin held close to his side.

Soon the Soudanese checked his gait and resumed his steady march without so much as turning his head about; a single roar came from behind them—and then the night was as silent, the desert as magically white, the stars as incessantly curious as before. And they tramped onward with the same deliberation, as inflexible in their course and determination as was the moon that climbed slowly down toward the western horizon. Only—there were but *two* white ghosts before Sam now, and there was a double space between them.

And he knew that a lion had sprung upon the first Berber and must have bitten his head right off—else the ring that had encircled his neck had not come free so easily.

Sam shrugged his shoulders with a touch of fatalism that he had caught—perhaps from the Arabs, perhaps from the desert. It was Kismet.

And so they marched on until the stars had all passed by and the sun had lighted the desert to a yellow, blinding glare that swept over and through them like the breath of flames. Mirages swam about them—shining waters and waving palms and pastures of browsing herds; and ahead of them, a trifle larger and of a heavier blue, was the line of the Atlas.

They stopped in the shelter of some rocks in a broken country, ate and drank a bit and then threw themselves in the sand and slept.

III

WHEN Sam awoke it was nearly sundown. The Soudanese was sitting up, the others still lay sprawling and asleep. Sam watched the Soudanese, who was looking rigidly at something. Following the line of his gaze the American negro imagined that he glimpsed something tawny vanishing behind a great rock. His eye met that of the Soudanese, burning with intelligence, uneasily.

Sam considered. The Soudanese was a son of the desert and *knew* the desert. Why the look of understanding? Could it have been a lion that he saw? *Could it have been the same lion?*

The others awakened and when each had eaten a handful of dates and drunk a sip of water they hunted about until they found a small boulder. The Berber held the vacant neck-ring edgeways on a rock and the Soudanese dashed the smaller stone against it with all his force. The boulder was shattered to powder, the Berber's hands were cut, but the ring remained intact.

Prolonged search failed to discover another stone of harder composition, but they came upon a cleft between two great rocks that promised protection. It was perhaps eight feet through and so narrow they could scarce squeeze into it one at a time. The Soudanese examined it carefully and then motioned Sam to enter. He and the Senegalese followed, the Berber sought to follow suit, but the Soudanese thrust him back.

Articulating fiercely, the Berber again attempted to enter and was thrust out with a force that jerked Sam's head violently against a projection, he being separated from the Berber only by a single interval of chain.

The Berber turned a look, half of despair, half of defiance, toward the desert. Perhaps he did not understand the danger that

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threatened, but he knew that the three within the cleft were leagued against him. They were the strongest and in their selfishness were giving him as a hostage to whatever peril the desert might hold. It was Kismet—and it was the Law of Life.

Night fell and they waited silently—the three elementals and their bait.

An hour after sundown the moon came peeping over the rim of the desert and wrapped it in a wan repose. Sam Ames watched the stars; the other three watched the desert.

A low gasp from the Berber called Sam's attention and he looked out to see an enormous lion standing in the moonlight not fifty yards away. The beast raised his head and gave a roar that lost itself like thunder along the horizon. With the energy of despair the Berber squeezed into the cleft and the Soudanese drove him forth with a blow in the face that half stunned him.

At the clank of the chains the lion turned and stalked majestically toward them. At the distance of fifteen feet he stopped.

The Soudanese held the Berber, who hung limp and useless, in a grasp of iron. The doomed man's frightened gasps and the heavy breathing of the others were like the ticks of a watch in the overwhelming silence. The lion stood motionless, his head on high, and looked at them.

The moonlight coated his massive bulk with a silver film, each hair of his bristling mane was a silver thread, his eyes were two blazing balls and his tufted tail stood stiff and straight as a rod of iron.

His rigidity seemed to collapse and he dropped to earth and lay crouched, his eye glaring up at them from the ground. His tail swept the earth in slow arcs that raised a luminousness of particles of sand that floated about him, and he snarled deep in his throat with a rumbling that burst into a roar as he sprang.

The Soudanese leaped backward, the beast seized the Berber by the shoulder and turned like a flash to bound away. The chain pulled taut with a force that nearly dislocated Sam's neck, and the combined resistance of the three tore his prey from the lion's mouth.

With a single impulse they frantically squeezed farther back into the crevice, and the body of the Berber was jerked after them, just as the great cat with a furious snarl turned and dashed himself against the cleft. The froth and blood from his chops were blown in their faces, the beast, raging, reared on his hind legs and lunged viciously in at them with his forepaw, missing the Soudanese and tearing flesh from the arm of the Senegalese.

The Soudanese stooped and drew El-Achiri's knife quickly across the Berber's throat and thrust the body forth as the lion bit and scratched at the rock in baffled rage. The great cat seized the body as it lay half out of the cleft, gave it a shake or two to make sure of his hold and then leaped away again. The chain tautened, there was a dull snap, and the lion trotted rapidly off in the moonlight with his prey thrown over his shoulder. And out in the sand lay something round that the three did not deign to look at as they crept forth from the cleft.

The Senegalese held up his clawed arm and poured sand on it in a fine stream to stop the bleeding; the Soudanese took the dates and the waterskin; Sam rubbed the neck-ring in the sand to make it less slippery, picked up the chains that hung between himself and the Senegalese and they started.

The procession was shrunken, the two ghosts were a trifle wan, and the chains clanked more lugubriously. Occasionally the Senegalese, who staggered a little, turned uneasily, for he seemed to hear the soft patter of footsteps in the silence about him; but Sam Ames and the Soudanese, grim, determined, and clear-headed, marched onward, a trifle feebly and more slowly, but just as steadily as before.

IV

THEY rested the following day in a naked plain of sand that teemed with the peculiar life of the desert. Once a desert lark came winging out of the nowhere and startled them with a burst of song. The place was full of sand-rats and strange little lizards with names as peculiar as themselves—geckos and skinks, and it was fairly alive with horned vipers.

The heat and glare of the sun were unbearable and they suffered tortures of thirst that forced them to sop their parched palates with the last of their precious water. Their dates were consumed also. They lay naked and writhing in the blazing sand. Once a horned viper crawled directly over the stomach of the Soudanese and he

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watched it calmly while it coiled and then twisted away.

When evening came a light breeze sprang up that brought with it a shred of relief.

The eyes of Sam Ames kept running over the Herculean proportions of the Soudanese, and over the other with his useless arm. He became suddenly aware that the Soudanese was making a similar comparison. They smiled spontaneously. Both had come to the same conclusion.

Were they attacked by the lion again, they had no means of defense. There was no friendly cleft this time. Should he kill one, the only hope of safety for the others was to lie quiet while he devoured his prey. Even then he might kill all three. The greatest danger was to the Soudanese, for only a single interval of chain separated him from the Senegalese, while Sam had a triple space. *For the Senegalese must be sacrificed.*

The two strongest must survive to drag the heavy chains across the desert to the *djebel* that shone before them alluringly. In their smile Sam and the Soudanese determined to give their companion to the lion.

Shortly before sundown they rose and plodded on, very slowly, for the Senegalese moved stiffly. When darkness came they huddled together in the sand until the lop-sided moon came up. Then they set forth again, the Soudanese with the empty water-skin, Sam carrying the full weight of the chains between the Senegalese and himself.

They marched for a couple of hours. Nothing occurred and the Senegalese seemed to recover and march as steadily as the others.

Suddenly he stopped and listened, staring fixedly back the way they had come. The other two did likewise, but they could hear nothing, see nothing. The wounded negro looked despairingly from one to the other of the two figures that stood motionless beside him. His face, turned up to the moon, was wan and shrunken. He stared back upon the desert, folding his arms, with a stoic resignation. His head drooped upon his breast and he would have fallen had not the other two seized him. Still they could hear nothing, see nothing.

Then the lion came up silently and swiftly, his enormous bounds slowing to a trot as he caught sight of the group awaiting him.

There was not a bush nor a stone in sight —nothing but sky and sand and the waiting three. The Senegalese stood unresisting, attending his fate. The Law of Life had caught him, the cunning one, in its relentless millstones. It was a survival of the fittest and he was wounded.

Sam gripped his wounded arm tight and at the pressure of his hand he felt the blood spurt forth from the wound and trickle warmly over his fingers. Still he did not relax his grasp.

At a distance of twenty yards the lion squatted on his haunches like an enormous dog and looked at them. Once he crouched. Then he rose to his feet again and circled uneasily about them, snarling and sniffing in the odor of man. The silent immobility of the group that faced him always was strange, incomprehensible, disquieting. Perhaps it concealed a snare. Little by little he narrowed his circles. The moonlight seemed to gather in the depths of his eyes, concentrated into a sullen fire; it played in sinuous waves over the running curves of his giant frame. The twain that held the Senegalese watched him fearlessly.

The beast crouched and sprang on the same instant and the iron hands of the two thrust the Senegalese squarely into his jaws. The latter did not even gasp.

Even as Sam Ames sprang aside he was jerked off his feet and dragged furiously through the sand, now on his back, now on his face as he clutched at the ring and chain to keep his neck from being broken. Suddenly he stopped and, after a moment, turning slowly, lying flat on his stomach, he saw the lion.

The cat had stopped and was devouring his prey.

On the ground beside him lay something black and motionless. Sam wondered. Was the Soudanese dead also?

Always before the lion had seemed to Sam a fierce creature that killed as men kill, for the love of killing; the king of beasts, noble but cruel. Now as it snarled over its prey he saw that it was a foul and hungry thing that killed to fill a relentless, ravening maw—and he shuddered and shut his eyes.

The lion sniffed of the prostrate Soudanese once, raised its head and opened its hideous jaws with a yawn—then stalked solemnly away. Sam watched it until it had faded in the distance. He rose and approached the Soudanese, who sat up, felt of his neck, climbed painfully to his feet. They looked at each other dumbly. Then

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without a word, half-dragging, half-carrying the chain between them, they staggered on. Sam stumbled over the water-skin and picked it up.

V

DAY broke on the twain crawling slowly onward. The dawn came with a pink flush in the east that grew into a yellow flame, burning through high-piled mountains of haze along the horizon and sweeping over the desert, leaving it ablaze. For a moment it lay still, and then the heat began to toss and dance and a quivering gauze spread its meshes abroad in the atmosphere. The distant mountains sprang up in an amethyst silhouette, clearly etched and perfect, from out the shadows; across its base was drawn a faint blue line that undulated like a string in a gale and Sam knew that this was the palm-trees of an oasis that could not be far away.

A herd of gazelles sprang off before them with graceful bounds and melted into the haze.

They plodded on with renewed hope, but in an hour the heat was unbearable. It swept through them in great waves, leaving their membranes shriveled—desiccated. Sam felt strength and mental balance ebbing from him, and, manfully as he fought against this weakening, it was not long before his tortured mind and body began to waver and he struggled on only in answer to an unconscious, unreasoning idea that he must reach the mountains.

His discordant imagination began to teem with fantasies. It seemed that the desert was covered with a deep sea of sweet water, and always there opened for him a passage through it as for the Israelites of old. Sam would have wished to plunge in it, drench himself, fill his stomach—his lungs, until he was soaked, drowned, saturated in every fiber. It flowed all about him in long, shimmering waves; he could hear their musical murmur—at the sound his arid membranes throbbed in agony; they covered the far horizon and carried all the world in their grasp—all but him—Sam Ames. He would have dived into it headlong as one dives through a coming breaker, to draw the heavenly moisture through his mouth, his nose, his eyes, his ears, his every pore, but always there opened before him the burning lane of dryness, while a brazen monster in the sky breathed upon him with withering breath and shot blazing arrows into his brain.

His skin was cracking, his blood turning to boiling paste; presently his joints would cease to work from rustiness, he would shrivel to dust and then the waves would sweep over him and wash him into oblivion.

The Soudanese fell and Sam waited patiently for him to rise, which he did with difficulty. His eyes were bloodshot, his thick lips were become monstrous and paled to a sickening blue. He seized Sam by the arm and the touch rasped like a file.

"*El-ma!*" cried the Soudanese thickly. "*Mon-hnac el-ma!*" He pointed tragically to the mountains and they staggered on again.

Sam laughed now and then, silently, and would have sung "Dixie," but his tortured tongue and throat refused to respond. Yet at the simple thought the air seemed to ring with the tune in an infernal din—fifes squealing it, horn and trombones and trumpets blaring it, stringed instruments twanging it and drums beating it like claps of thunder. And in the sea about him swam Pharaoh's drowned host with lion faces singing it.

"O Gawd!" cried Sam, speech coming to his paralyzed muscles. "O Gawd! Lemme drown in it lak de 'Gyptians! I ain't no Jew. I'se a niggah. O Gawd, lemme drown! Lemme drown! Oh, foh de shadder of a rock in de wilderness!"

Then he fell and lay for a moment while the Soudanese, after tugging vainly at the chains, waited in turn.

"*El-ma!*" said this one pleadingly. "*El-ma!*" he coaxed, "*el-ma!*"

Sam rose and tottered ahead. It seemed to him now that he was a thing accursed—that there was no sun, no dryness save what emanated from himself, that he moved through a fair land on the bottom of a sea of life-giving moisture carrying with him a hideous radius of aridity and death. He, Sam Ames, was the blight.

He could distinguish tiny green islands through the waves. It was evident that they were coming to the habitable part of the ocean. One sprang up directly before them and grew slowly. Sam watched it unblinkingly lest it disappear the moment he closed his eyes. Beyond it he could see some black rocks swept bare of sand.

"*El-ma!*" gurgled the Soudanese, tugging at the chains. Sam, too, pressed forward

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with a last spasm of strength and in a moment more they were lying under a group of ragged date-palms, drawing water with their skin from a well half filled with sand.

They tore the water-skin from each other and drank in turn until they could feel the water bloating their stomachs.

Sam felt strength steal back into his veins with the precious moisture, his blood again turned to liquid. He looked about. There were traces of man—charred sticks, fragments of straw. Not fifteen miles away was the *djebel*, with the oasis darkly patched against its red side.

Here was water, overhead was food, against the mountain yonder were men—he and the Soudanese had reached the promised land. They were saved.

He cackled with laughter and fell back unconscious.

The Soudanese looked at him curiously. "*El-mal*" he grunted contentedly, raising the water-skin. Then he too fell in a stupor.

It was not long until both recovered and reveled again in the joy of drinking. They splashed water over their parched skins, and once thirst was satisfied they began to suffer the pangs of hunger. They had reached the oasis toward the middle of the afternoon and but a short period of daylight remained to them. They approached the nearest palm.

Sam stooped, the Soudanese climbed his back and as Sam straightened made a spring and grasped the trunk of the palm. The old leaf-scars gave him a foothold and he began to climb, Sam relieving him of the weight of the chains by holding them as high as he might. It was hard work for a man in his weakened condition, but the Soudanese finally managed to pull himself to a seat among the fronds of the tree. His breast and hands were bleeding.

He pulled off clumps of dates and flung them down. They were delicious and Sam ate them in slow content.

He noticed that the Soudanese was doing something with the chain. He stared a moment and then gave it a furious jerk as he understood.

The Soudanese had trimmed off a number of fronds that grew out of the top of the tree and hung the first vacant neck-ring about them. Pull as Sam might from his position below, he could not dislodge them when the Soudanese held them in place. And now, while the other sat in the tree in safety, his hunger and thirst satisfied, he, Sam, was left below as the bait to the lion.

For were both to climb the tree the lion might wait—in his craving for the toothsome dainty that he had followed across the desert.

Sam quickly noted that another palm of equal size stood not ten feet from the one the Soudanese had climbed. And there were thirty feet of chain between the two. The cunning of civilization came to the American negro's aid.

He seated himself philosophically. "Yoh no come down, eh?" he muttered. "We see, yoh brack niggah, yoh!" There were more than three hours of darkness between sunset and moonrise. Much could happen in that time.

When it was pitch-black Sam rose softly, described a turn about the second palm, pulled the chain tight as he might and raised it high, holding the turn in place with his hand. The Soudanese, hearing, began to tug, but Sam, with the advantage of a turn about the trunk, had a tremendous advantage. He began to climb.

Each time that he gained a few feet he loosened the turn and shoved it higher. The Soudanese, pulling constantly, gained a bit of chain each time he did this, but Sam had plenty and to spare and climbed constantly. It was heart-breaking work, the strain on his muscles was terrible, but to a fierce determination Sam added a grim absorption in his idea that gave him a superhuman strength. In half an hour he had gained the point where the fronds sprang out from the trunk and was already in safety as far as attack from below was concerned. He rested, holding the chain easily in place and standing on the rugged leaf-scars.

A quick spring carried him to the center of the fronds, where he found an easy seat, and he drew a long breath of relief. Now he felt that he could dislodge his enemy at any time, for he had a lateral pull against the fronds that the neck-ring encircled. But Sam was far too cunning for this. Were the Soudanese on the ground he would be able to run around Sam's tree to unwind the loop and pull Sam to the ground in turn—unless he chanced to be disabled by the fall.

So Sam sat tight and waited.

He heard lions roar from different directions. This was somewhat reassuring, for he felt certain that none of them could be the one that had followed them.

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Presently the moon rose and flooded the desert with light. The two in the palm-trees stared at each other. They were not ten feet apart. The Soudanese had pulled the chain taut between them. In the clear light each could see every line of the other's face. The Soudanese pointed below.

Beneath them stood the lion, motionless. One great paw was raised as he stared across the desert, searching for the prey that seemed to have vanished inexplicably. Sam took a deep breath. The lion was there; the lion would wait—*one must go to the lion!*

He turned to his enemy, nerved for the battle.

The Soudanese threw back his hand with a hoarse shout, something flashed, an acute shock shot through Sam's whole body as something struck his shoulder-bone. The strength went from him with a rush and he tottered on his seat in despair. The advantage of the knife had outweighed his superior cunning! The Soudanese had won after all.

The latter tugged fiercely at the chain, screaming like a demon. The lion roared and pranced below. Again Sam's cunning came to his rescue. He had but one chance left—a desperate one.

"We see, yoh brack niggah!" he screamed and he flung himself from the tree directly across the chain on which the Soudanese was tugging with all his force. Sam gripped it fiercely and hung to it for an instant.

The Soudanese tumbled from his perch like a ripe plum. Sam followed, to be brought up with a jerk that almost dislocated his neck; the loop around the tree stuck for a moment, then slipped and twisted; he heard a single shriek and then he too tumbled to the ground unconscious, the chain clanking down upon him.

But the lion had seized the Soudanese the instant he struck the ground.

Once Sam was conscious of a great weight on his chest and a fetid breath in his face; then he opened his eyes on the silent night. He sat up. He was alone.

When day came he dragged himself to the well. His left side was paralyzed and he could not move his neck. Across the plain the mountain shone clear and blue, and beside the dark patch of the palms of the oasis he could glimpse the sheen of a *chott*. It called him. But Sam knew that he could never reach it. Nor with his useless side could he climb the tree again.

He sat for a while dumbly. In a clump of grass at a distance the sun glittered on something tawny.

An impotent rage shook the negro's frame.

"Debbil! Debbil!" he screamed, shaking his fist feebly. "Yellow debbil!"

VI

ONCE a vulture came and Sam chased it away and threw feeble handfuls of sand on its quest until it was covered from sight. While doing this he found El-Achiri's knife.

All day he sat and stared at the mountains and it was not until the middle of the afternoon that he dragged himself to the rock behind the oasis. For there if any place he would find salvation.

The rock was nothing more than a bulge in the bedrock that had been uncovered by the sirocco. It was cracked in places, but offered no shelter. These cracks were for the most part filled with sand. Sam dug in one that was no more than six inches wide and found that it spread out into a cavity underneath that was roofed over with two thin plates of rock. Some ten feet away it widened to the width of a couple of feet.

With his single hand Sam dug out the dry sand until he had tunneled his way into the crevice to its narrowest opening. With slight labor he made himself a place where he might lie—secure from attack. Only the lion, should he come, might thrust in a paw and mangle him, for Sam's face as he lay there was not three inches from the crack.

He whetted the long knife to a razor edge on the sandstone, muttering to himself.

"Yoh come—yoh scratch me—ah scratch yoh too—yellow debbil!" he raved feebly.

Just before dark he went back to the well, drank deep, and ate some dates that he found lying on the ground. Then he went back to his den in the rock, crawled in and waited, with his face to the crack, now lying in a sort of stupor, now raving light-headedly for the "yellow debbil" to come.

The moon rose until Sam could see it bright and misshapen directly over his narrow crevice—a bulk blotted it out—something sniffed and blew a foul breath in his face with a rumbling snarl—the negro clutched his long knife, thrust up through the crevice with a frantic effort, felt it go home and ripped—ripped—ripped——

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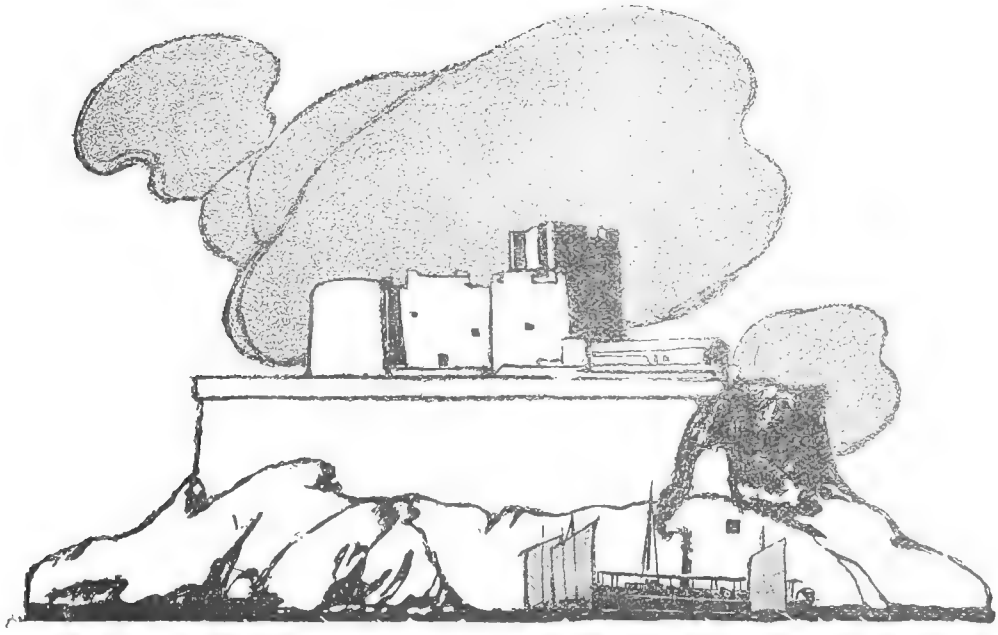
"*Yellow debbil!*" he screamed as a hot stream flooded his face.

Those of the Ouled Abdul Kerin who had followed the escaped slaves of El-Achiri on their swift *meharis* had read the story of the epic combat in the sands. As they came to the oasis in the flush of the morning they saw a gleaming figure seated on the uncovered rock behind it. They approached.

It was a man, red with dried blood from head to foot; about his neck was a long chain with four vacant neck-rings. They recognized the strange slave of El-Achiri.

He was seated on the dead and disemboweled body of an enormous lion and his eyes gleamed dully at them from out his encarmined face.

"Ah done kill um," said Sam Ames slowly. "De yellow debbil! Ah done kill um."



PERSONALLY CONDUCTED

By George Allan England

GAY sparkled the January sun upon the waters of the Vieux Port with their swarming, bright-sailed craft, and gay rang out the songs from little groups here, there, along the Quai.

In the air floated strange odors from the carts of waffle-sellers, venders of fried fish, dealers in pink-fleshed sea-urchins. An old peasant woman, her brows bound with a kerchief of blue, passed by.

Everywhere loitered the holiday throng—free, happy, careless, for it was Sunday morning on the water-front at Marseilles, and over the Mediterranean the great sun of Provence was glowing warm.

But in the heart of Robert Fleming rose no response to all that life, color and gaiety as he stood aft on the lower deck of the *Bois Sacré*, the little Château d'If steamer, and moodily gazed out through the jungle of shipping at the sea. To him that southern merrymaking meant less than nothing. The thermometer of his spirits marked minus four hundred, the absolute zero of empty space; for Bob was stone broke there, more

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than three thousand long and weary miles —wet miles—from little old Broadway.

He was hungry, too. He needed a bath, a sleep, a shave and several other things that had of late been rarities for him. With a rueful squint in his blue eyes and a twist of his humorous mouth he glanced down at his shoes. One of them was torn.

"Hmm!" reflected Bob. "Even though that San Reno watch-dog *did* commit suicide, that doesn't make his tooth-marks whole, now, does it?" Sadly he shook his head.

"Rather objectionable, that is, for a fact," he admitted to himself. "So are these burns on my coat where the cinders landed that night. Never again for mine, bareback-riding stunts on a French locomotive-tender!" And with solemnity he raised his right hand into the sunlit air.

"Never again for Monte Carlo, either!" he growled. "Say, it seems to me the hotel chap there might have let me have my razor, at least, when he foreclosed on the baggage. Oh, hang the place and the luck and—everything! I was the original Solid Ivory, all right enough, to leave home that way just because a girl said 'No,' and because my governor got nasty about it with his remarks that if I wasn't man enough to win *her*, I wasn't man enough to suit *him!* Uncommonly fond, the governor was, of Eleanor. I reckon it runs in the family; I've still got it bad, myself, even after all that's happened because of her. Bad, bad —mighty bad!

"What kind of a fool idea did I have, anyhow? Thought I'd make things better by coming over here and trying to forget 'em? The devil!" And he shrugged his shoulders, over which hung by straps five shiny pairs of marine-glasses—glasses that represented his last desperate hope of salvation from the pit of hunger.

"I wonder what she'd say, now, if she knew," he presently resumed. "I suppose I might rig up some way to cable home—but no, not in a thousand years, after what the pater said when I vamoosed! Nobody can tell *me* to go hang—nobody at all—no, not even Fleming, Senior! Nothing doing with the cable. I'll plug this game along myself, now that I've gone and got mired, even if I have to live and die a Frenchman. It's lucky I was brought up on languages and such—otherwise I'd certainly be in bad. Well, I've played square, anyhow, and made a game fight of it, and I'm not dead—yet! But these glasses aren't such a much, now, are they, to stand off the wolf with, eh?" Contemplatively he studied his slim little stock in trade.

"Cost me my last three francs to hire 'em and to get the concession on this tub, today, *with* badge," he reflected sadly. "Let's see—two francs a pair I'll charge. If I let 'em all, that's ten. I stand to clear seven francs, if the tourists bite! Seven francs! A dollar forty. Magnificent! But—supposing they don't bite, what then? Huh, it's me to the fast-cure, that's all. They say fasting isn't so bad, once you get the hang of it. But I'm not keen on sleeping out on the race-track, down there by the Prado. No, not visibly!" By comparison, even "Grandpa's" fifty-centime cots in the rue du Musée looked palatial. Bob groaned.

As though answering that groan, the little steamer's whistle shrilled up into the bright morning air, piercing through the jumble of noises on the Quai.

"*Montez à bord, messieurs!*" harangued the ticket-seller on the wharf. "*Montez à bord!*"

Bob walked to the stern, sat down on one of the dingy red cushions, and whistled, too —a bar from "All In, Down and Out!" Through force of habit he felt for his pipe, but, recalling that he hadn't even a fill of the cheapest brown-papery French tobacco, relapsed to inaction. There was nothing to do for a little while yet, anyhow. Even that brief respite from humiliation was a boon. Not until the steamer should have left the pier did Bob plan to invade the upper deck where the passengers had, for the most part, already been assembled when he had come aboard. For, once away from the land, he felt there would be less chance of escape from his projected importunities. But at thought of what lay before him he set his teeth and swore.

The boat, her engines panting and coughing, swung gradually under way. Out from the tangle of yachts and sailboats she drew and began threading her passage among the fishing craft in the Bassin—some lying at anchor with red and yellow sails furled, others slowly moving hither or yon. The tall buildings on either hand of the port began to slip away. Past a row of gray torpedo-boats lying side by side the steamer plowed. Far ahead the huge fabric of the transporter-bridge, straddling like a spidery

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steel Colossus of Rhodes across the entrance to the harbor, began to loom vast and high.

"Great guns, now for it!" gulped Bob, wetting his parched lips. He realized that at last the moment was at hand when he must swallow his pride—if he were subsequently to swallow anything else—and when, for the first time in his life, he must approach the Public, that inchoate, close-fisted monster, with the idea of trying to sell it something. "Here's where I win out—or swear off the eating habit. Buck up!"

II

BOB took a grip on himself, slung the glasses over his strong shoulder as nonchalantly as he could, set his hat straight, and then, with the most unwilling feet that ever a man dragged, started along the narrow runway that led amidships to the upper deck.

A couple of men were leaning over the rail, close by the stair. Bob noticed them subconsciously. One was of medium build; the other tall and lean, yet powerful. Italians both, they seemed. Tourists they certainly were not. The shorter one wore a dingy white *béret*, or flap cap, with its wide borders lopping down about his ears. From his loose lips dangled a cigarette. He seemed a bit greasy, Bob thought; even his black mustache shone, as with nervous fingers he twisted it. The taller shot at Bob a furtive, quick, all-seeing glance from as evil a pair of eyes as ever glowered in a man's head. But Bob was too vastly perturbed by his approaching ordeal to give them more than passing note. For now he was at the companionway—was climbing—was on the upper deck.

He looked inquiringly at a sailor there, a stout chap, with a broad and hairy chest showing through the open V of his blouse, a red-tasseled cap on his curly head. The sailor nodded. "*Ca ira, c'matin,*" he remarked confidentially, forehoping a division of the spoils. Bob tried to smile, but failed. Not the clear meridional sunlight, not the freshening breeze as the steamer drew near the bridge, not all the life and beauty of that magnificent scene, could infuse him with cheer. For now, immediately, he stood face to face with the most humiliating moment he had ever yet known in all his eight-and-twenty years. The time was upon him!

By the starboard rail an elderly double-chinned Frenchman was sitting with madame his wife—true *bourgeois* types, visitors, perhaps, from some provincial town. These good folk Bob addressed with stammering and uncertain solicitation. To them he held out a pair of glasses. "Two francs for the trip, monsieur! Only two francs for the entire trip!"

But monsieur merely shook a negativing finger, then with his cane continued to point out to madame the ancient Greek inscription on Fort St. Jean, abeam. To Bob he paid no further heed than to the steamer's funnel. Bob, for the first time in his life, realized the precise difference between buying a thing and trying to sell it. A quick stab of fear pierced through his anger and humiliation. He turned, reddening, to a whiskered German tourist, who rebuffed him by not even glancing up from a much-thumbed Baedeker. Bob felt hot desires to punch the German's jowl, but remembered his status and moved away slowly from one passenger to another, offering, always offering, the glasses.

Fate favored at the sixth encounter. The boat had now passed the forts and was abreast the Château du Pharo, where once dwelt Napoleon III. A little Swiss lady in black, baited by this lure, showed interest in the glasses; but at the price she stuck. She offered one franc. Bob demanded one-franc-fifty. They compromised on one-twenty-five. He handed her the glass, then waited, sick at heart, while she fumbled out the coin. The silver piece and the five big, worn coppers seemed to burn his palm. Hastily he pocketed them, and with the remaining stock began again his penitential plea.

The *Bois Sacré*, veering to pass an inbound three-master, was now abreast the beacon on the point and was beginning to make her manners to the swell of the open sea. Around her spiraled the gulls, screaming. A slim, swift motor-boat clove the waters far indeed; the *brr-r-r-r-r* of its exhaust crackled sharply through the golden morning air. To north, to south, the coast opened out—gray-white mountain ranges, with terraced slopes to which clung dull green patches of olive-orchards as they climbed toward dazzling patches of snow on distant peaks.

Keenly the sea-wind blew. Before it the white-caps curled, frothing the clear green waters to spun silver. Beyond the long

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gray islands, far off the shore, drifted the smudge from an outbound liner. From the gilded statue of Notre Dame, high above the city, and from the lenses and metal roofs of the lighthouses in the harbor flashed the reflected sun. Already, far ahead, showed the squat Château d'If, crouching on its barren isle of cream-tinted volcanic rock.

But Bob was caring for nothing of all this. The interest of the tourists, their enthusiasms and eager platitudes stirred him not even to a smile. He stood there, suddenly very sick at heart, trembling a little, dazed and gasping; for, close up to the bow, leaning on her graceful elbow on the rail—sat *she!*

Clad in a long and loose coat of pongee, with a wide straw hat whence fluttered a scarf of crimson silk, there she was—Eleanor. Her face was hidden from him, but by the contour of her cheek and by the masses of her reddish-brown hair he knew her only too well. His heart struck work a minute, then threshed out like a frightened colt. With widened eyes he stared, the glasses dangling from his hand, a type and image of dismay.

All his one-time courage gone, Bob's first clear thought was of retreat, of self-effacement—anything to escape the gross humiliation of discovery. But that was not to be. For the girl, turning to watch a purple fisher-boat that foamed heeling past, its broad lateen outspread like a huge bird's wing, swept the deck with her eyes. She saw him. As from the lash of a dog-whip Bob cringed under the impact of her gaze. With but a momentary heightening of color, with hardly a quiver of the lids, she looked him over for a moment, took in the details of his shabbiness, observed the glasses, finished with a study of his ragged shoe. Before that steady look Bob shrank, quivering, and to his cheeks mounted a burning torrent of blood.

Then suddenly the manhood in him flared out. Toward her he took a step or two along the rolling deck. But Eleanor, with an almost imperceptible shrug, a lifting of the arched eyebrows, a little smile, turned back again to her contemplation of the sea. The indifference of her back inhibited him, numbed and paralyzed him. The stammering words he had half formulated perished on his lips.

For a moment his face went yellow-white as ivory. Then into his fine eyes leaped twin fires of caustic anger. Vanished in an instant all notions of retreat. And with a fixity of purpose that denied even the possibility of failure, his head held high, voice resonant, he began once more:

"Two francs, messieurs, mesdames—only two francs for the entire trip! Indispensable, messieurs! Magnificent view—two francs, two francs, mesdames! Only two francs!"

III

UP THE long, winding incline from the landing-stage to the gate in the wall surrounding the château the passengers were climbing, single file. Bob, with but a single pair of glasses now hanging from his shoulder, watched them from the deck. In his heart lay a bitterness the like of which he never had thought possible. Upon his lip curled a smile, more than half a sneer, that showed the even white row of his teeth. And to himself he muttered something that wouldn't look well in print.

Not even the coins that weighted his pocket diverted his bitter thoughts. The picturesqueness of the scowling walls and towers with the lighthouse over all, the surf-washed rocks, the long brown rolls of fisherman's nets drying in the sun—nothing of this appealed to him, for the crimson hat of Eleanor had just disappeared within the gate. The girl had gone without so much as even a single backward glance at him.

"Odd, infernally odd, eh," thought he, "that the world shouldn't be big enough to spare me this? I might have known she was on this side of the pond—she comes over almost every Winter—but this sort of hard luck beats *me!*"

He paused a moment, then resumed: "I suppose she's with that everlasting Aunt Ellen of hers. Probably left the old person at the hotel, whichever one she's at. No entrée for me there, that's evident. Ah, well——" Puzzled, angry, sore, he felt again for the tobacco that was not.

Toward him, along deck, lounged the graft-hunting sailor.

"Is it that monsieur goes ashore?" asked he.

Bob shook a surly head and grunted. Already, in more prosperous days, he had visited the place. It held nothing of interest for him now, even had Eleanor's pres-

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ence there not withheld him. He turned away disgustedly and went below to sit and wait the intervening three-quarters of an hour till the party should have returned. Gloomily he resigned himself to bitterness and ennui.

By the rail the two Italians were still standing. They seemed undecided about something—perplexed, in disagreement. At sight of Bob, the tall one nudged the other and lowered his voice, but not before Bob had caught a sinister word or two—"*L'Inglesa! Non c'è pericolo, ti dico!*"—that whetted his attention and drew his eyes to narrow slits.

The Italians moved away toward the gangplank. Bob looked out to sea and began whistling again, carelessly enough, but his heart was thudding. "*L'Inglesa?*" thought he. "The Englishwoman?" But—there was no Englishwoman aboard. "They must mean Eleanor!" he realized, mad clear through in an instant that such ruffians should even have dared speak of her at all. And, too, "*Non c'è pericolo!*"—"No danger!"—What could *that* mean? Danger—to whom? Bob's mind boiled with sudden violent suspicion, with increased anger. A hard look came into his eyes.

"I guess," said he, half aloud, as the two fellows started up the foot-path, "I rather guess, my friends, that you'll bear watching!"

Into his thoughts came the memory of two costly rings that Eleanor always wore—rings that the men might possibly have seen. Once there had been three rings, but—Bob grimaced sourly at the recollection of how that third ring had been given back to him. Never since that day, five months ago, had it left its pocket; never had even the bitterest hardships of the past weeks so much as tempted him to pawn it—the ring that she had worn. Bob shook himself back into the present and looked up. The two men had vanished. Quickly he left the *Bois Sacré* and followed them.

By the time he reached the stony yard which lay within the wall and in front of the château they had already passed the castle entrance. Bob steered a quick passage between the Scylla of post-card and shell-souvenir booths to right, and the Charybdis of a beer-garden with hurdy-gurdy music to left, and pressed forward through the main gate with the half-effaced inscription, BAT'A, into the square inner court.

"Not here! And Eleanor's not here, either!" thought he, with a quick glance round at the stone well to one side, the pavement worn smooth by feet innumerable, the shuttered windows and the iron-railed stair that wound up, story by story, to the interior balconies whence opened the tiers of cells.

Two sirens behind a show-case smiled on him, proffering more post-cards: but Bob only touched the badge upon his lapel and shook his head, then picked up one of the little pale blue tapers laid out for visitors, and started up the first flight of ancient stone steps.

Since, save for the two card-sellers, the court was empty, Bob knew the party must all be above with the guide, doing the conventional round—inspecting the cell of the Iron Mask, the dungeons of the Abbé Faria and of Monte Cristo, the iron-lidded *oubliettes* with their black and hideous memories, the lookout-platform, the towers, and all the rest. Up he climbed. As he went, a sound of voices and of footsteps echoing on stone, above, told him the château-keeper was leading his flock along one of the hanging galleries.

Bob paused, suddenly embarrassed. Perhaps the party might be coming down. Perhaps he might have to meet Eleanor face to face on the narrow stair. If so—since she could not possibly have divined his motive in following her, a motive moreover, probably quite groundless—he could reap nothing from this espionage save a harvest of added scorn.

The girl might think him trying to dispose of the last pair of glasses which still hung over his shoulder. She might imagine he had sought her here, in this undeniably romantic spot, to beg a moment's parley on the high terrace overlooking the vast blue floor of the Mediterranean, gold-spangled by the magic sun. She might even—but Bob put all contingencies away. No matter what might come of it, he felt he must press on and up toward the square of blue that gleamed above the battlements; for, rounding the opposite side of the enclosure, on the second balcony above him, passed the guide. After him, singly or in little groups, straggled the tourists, holding their smoking tapers. Bob waited, watched, till the last of them had reached

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the stairs leading to the stairs atop the castle, but Eleanor was not among them—and neither were the two Italian rowdies.

Bob thought a moment, then—thought quick and hard, with a curious premonitory sinking round his heart. To his forehead he pressed a corded hand. His hunger and his weakness had all vanished. He knew, from a previous visit, that sometimes a tourist lingered in some vault or cell to carve initials in the stern, forbidding walls—to trace them there with candle smoke; perhaps to gaze out through the rusty grilled slits of windows at the sea, with banal reminiscence. But Eleanor was not that kind. If she were not with the others there must be some more cogent reason. The absence of the ruffians, too, strengthened his presentiment into a heart-sickening certainty. Their absence and the girl's, he knew, would not be noticed for some time. Occasionally visitors preferred to wander by themselves rather than follow the guide. The island afforded many a secluded place to sit and think. Ofttimes tourists waited over from one boat to the next. Every circumstance in the strange old place favored a bold crime and a successful getaway.

"By heaven," gasped Bob, "there's something wrong here—dead wrong! I'm going to find out what it is, right now!"

On up the stairs he ran, to the third gallery; then stopped, undecided, glancing this way and that, at the grim square doors and openings of the cells.

"Eh? What's *that?*" cried he. For from behind the iron-bound planks of the corner door, farthest from where he stood, issued a dull, faint sound—a sound as of a cry, quick-stifled.

"Good Lord!" he gulped, then with blind fury hurled himself along the runway toward the door.

IV

BUT before he slung his weight against it he stopped short. Even in his fear and rage he understood the futility of an assault upon that girded strength; understood, too, the danger of making any outcry, of summoning help, even though time remained for that. Quick as an electric spark the necessity of stratagem flashed to him; and with three cautious, furtive taps upon the door, he whispered sibilantly through the crack where the time-warped wood had shrunk from the stone jamb:

"Sssss-tttt! . . . Un momento! . . . Un momentin'!"

Inside, he heard a quick and startled word, then an answering voice. Followed a brief silence. Then a bolt grated. The door swung back an inch or two. The space widened. Out through the opening lowered a dark and evil eye.

Bob heard an oath. Against the door a weight was thrown; but already Bob's foot was in the crack. With scarlet rage Bob's whole strength, thewed by years of training, hurled itself against the oaken planking. The door burst inward. Bob reeled through, just as the taller of the Italians, overbalanced, sat down heavily on the bricked floor.

So quickly it all happened that Bob never quite knew the exact sequence of events. Half-blinded by his sudden entry from dazzling light to darkness, he caught only a glimpse of a white something crouched at the farther side of the round dungeon—of a gaping black cavity in the center of the floor—of a muscular and vicious figure that leaped toward him. Then Bob struck out, struck as though to kill, struck with every ounce of strength in his hard arm and knotted shoulder.

He felt his fist go *crack!* against a jaw. He felt something give and crumple—saw the figure lying contorted on the bricks; heard a gasping cry—the voice of Eleanor. But, before he could run to her, upscrambled the other Italian. In the half-light glimmering through the doorway, Bob saw a flicker of steel in a raised hand.

Bob dodged and circled. To close in on that blade, that murderous hand, he realized were suicide. And, as by inspiration, he swung the heavy marine-glasses free from his shoulder. By the long strap he whirled them, as a *gaucho* whirls the *bola*. Backward he stepped. Then with a quick forward run he drove them, full force, at the Italian's brutal head.

They struck with a dull, crushing impact. Up flew the man's arms. The blade clanked as it spun against the wall. It dropped no quicker than the man. Bob saw him sprawl, twitch and grow still.

"Bob!" he heard the girl's cry.

To her he ran. By her he knelt. In his vigorous arms he raised her, half-fainting, half-hysterical.

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"Hurt? Hurt, little girl?" he cried.

"Oh, they—they said——"

"No matter what they said, or what they offered to show you, in here," Bob answered, divining all, shuddering at the black menace of the abyss, the mouth of the *oubliette* that yawned in the middle of the vaulted dungeon. "No matter about that! Are you hurt—hurt? Tell me!"

"Only my finger, maybe. I fought—when they tried——"

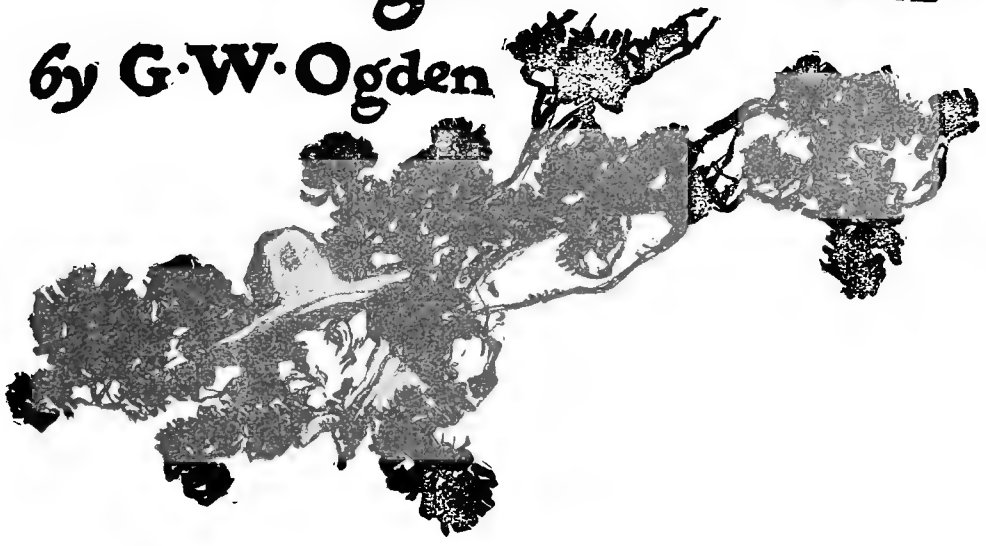
Bob raised her hand to his trembling lips.

"They didn't get the rings, after all, did they? They'll get nothing but about ten years apiece!" he laughed, with a quick reaction of nerves. "And I—say—I've got one you can wear again if—oh, hang it! Shall I wire the governor, and make the rest of this trip a—'personally conducted'? Tell him the—marine-glass business is a sure winner—and—and—shall I, little girl?"

Eleanor's arms about his neck, there in the gloom, her lips on his, gave all the answer that he asked.

Vengeance is Mine

by G·W·Ogden



"NO," SAID the driver, settling his back against the spokes of the hind wheel and presenting the soles of his feet to the fire, "Smith ain't my last name, it's my first. My last name's too fancy for everyday use, and I don't reckon it's good for anything but ketchin' a Swede girl or some other educated high-thinker that goes in for foreign-soundin' names." He lounged a little lower with that, and I apologized for having called him Mr. Smith countless times within the past few days.

"Oh, that's all right; I ain't a-carin' about that. If you'd 'a' called me by my name that carries the handle, then you might 'a' begged my pardon with good reason." He pushed some burned ends of brushwood into the fire, for it was chill in that altitude at night, even though it was July, and I could see a grin on his solemnly set face. "It's Phogenphole," he said.

"Not so bad," I comforted.

"Oh, no," he readily agreed, "it could 'a' been worse. My first name might 'a' been my last if they'd 'a' had a spite agin me in the labelin'-works."

We had made a week's pleasant camp on the Big Popo Agie, not far, as distances go in that wide country, from where it springs,

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full grown at a bound, out of the mountain-side and goes growling and roaring at the boulders in its bed, headstrong in its new strength. We were to break camp in the morning, I to go back to the railroad and the far city with the memories of pellucid streams, gray mountains and unvexed days. Smith to hire himself to the next that came wanting a wagon and team and guide. Perhaps Smith thought there wouldn't be another one soon; he appeared downcast over the prospect of going back.

"Lord knows when I'll come back to this country, Smith," said I.

"You're lucky," replied he shortly.

I ignored him, knowing that it would take chains to drag him away from it. "It may be two or three years," I continued, "and then I may not find you here to help me with your advice and experience."

"You'll find me here till I——" began Smith vehemently, but breaking off shortly to say, with his accustomed laggard drawl: "Well, if you don't come back for a couple of years we'll have to go acrost the mountains, because the sheep'll have this country by then."

"They are crowding in pretty fast," I reflected.

"Fast ain't the word. I've stood still right here in this valley and seen men start on nothin' and come out rich in five years. They's fortunes made out of sheep every year, and some of 'em that's makin' 'em ain't got brains enough to grease your boots with if they was took out and boxed up."

"You seem to know all about sheep; why don't you go in and make a quick fortune at the game, Smith?" I suggested.

"I know sheep," reflected Smith, "from teeth to toe-nails; and I wouldn't eat one of 'em if you was to give me half of this cussed State!"

"Still, I don't see what that has to do with other folks eating them," said I.

Smith walked over to the river-bank. I could see him in the moonlight, which steeped the white landscape like strained honey, tossing pebbles into the eddy from which we had taken many a rainbow trout during our too short stay. I reasoned that he must have been a cowboy at some time, and that my suggestion had offended him. I filled my pipe, and the wind carried the scent of an out-of-the-way Scottish mixture for which I have a fondness along to Smith on the river-bank. Smith had a nose for good tobacco. Soon he was headed back, his nose in the wind, like a bear that scents sweet milk.

He filled his pipe silently, and smoked without comment for a good while. Then, "I used to be in the sheep business myself," said he. "Like every other sheepman, I had sheep on the brain, only I had the disease a little worse than any man I've ever seen. If I hadn't been sheep-blind and sheep-headed so I seen like a sheep, I'd 'a' been a happier man than I am to-day.

"I've been up here in Wyoming a long time. When I first come I herded sheep over in the Lost Cabin country, and that's where I learnt the trade of raisin' them addle-headed beasts. You remember when the Shoshone lands was opened? Course, you was here, I remember you told me. Well, I come down to Lander to the drawin', and while I was hangin' around there I got acquainted with a little schoolmarm from Iowa. She wasn't no bigger 'n a minute, but she was wiser 'n a hundred years. Something funny about me and her from the start. We drawed numbers hand-runnin' and we picked claims joinin', both of them away up in the northwest corner, right on the line.

"I don't reckon I'd ever 'a' went to live on mine if it hadn't 'a' been that she was determined to stay up there and scratch out a nest. Well, dang it, we fooled around there two or three months puttin' up cabins and fences and things, then me and her we up and got married. I'd kind of figgered on that from the first, so my house was big enough. Both of us was set on sheep, so we put together about all we had and bought a hundred head. That was along in the Fall, and I begun runnin' 'em in the valley on the open range, where the grazin' was good.

"The cattlemen had been in there a long time, and they had always fought out the sheep, but we reckoned things 'd have to change, now all them people was a-settlin' in the reservation, so we didn't look for no trouble. But it wasn't two weeks after we got them sheep that we found a note tacked onto our corral gate one mornin', orderin' us to git them sheep out of the river-bottom and keep 'em out. It was signed 'Cattlemen,' nothin' else.

"We didn't take much stock in it, figgerin' that some feller had took it into his

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head to be smart and try to bluff us out on his own hook. But that girl of mine she was all nerve. They couldn't 'a' bluffed her if they'd 'a' rode up there in a bunch and read the notice out loud. So we kep' right on runnin' our little band of sheep in the valley where the grass was good.

"Funny thing about it was that we never seen no cattle nor no cattlemen at all around there. That made it worse, because we couldn't see where we was doin' anybody on earth the least bit of harm. But we mighty soon got another note, marked 'Last Warnin',' threatenin' our lives if we didn't move them sheep. I was for keepin' out of the valley, knowin' as I knowed the ways of them cowardly cattlemen, but that girl she had her independent, bossy schoolmarm blood up, and she wouldn't hear of it.

"Two nights later we was woke up by shootin' at the corral, which was about a hundred yards from the house. We couldn't see nobody, 'cause it was dark and no moon, but we shot at the flashes and the cowmen rode off. Well, we found several of our sheep dead the next mornin' and a good many shot up so bad we had to kill 'em.

"But we was bull-headed. Well, all sheepmen air. If they wasn't, them cowmen 'd 'a' discouraged and run 'em out of the country long ago. We said what other sheep-people has said, and still say, that the public lands was as much ourn as they was theirn, and we kep' on drivin' our sheep out onto them lands every mornin' and back every evenin', takin' turns watchin' the corral from the winder all night.

"Finally the work and the worry upset that there girl of mine—she wasn't no bigger around 'n my wrist—and she took down sick. I stood the night and day watch over them sheep for two days, then I seen that I couldn't hold out at it long, but I didn't have no notion of givin' in—oh, no! I didn't have no more sense right then than the foolishest sheep that ever gnawed grass down to the roots and then stood figgerin' on buttin' the world inside-out to git at them. Well, I reckon I'd do the same thing over agin if it come my way to do it. A man hates to lay down his hand and say he's whipped by a pack of rascals that does business in the dark.

"So that night I says—I thought I was smart: 'I'll fool you fellers one.' So I waited till dark and drove the sheep off over to my little girl's claim, where we had a feller livin' to hold the title, and shut 'em up in the corral there. Goin' back home I heerd some shootin' over my way, and I lit out into a lope. I was on foot, and didn't have no gun. I never did like to carry a gun since the time I shot a feller in hot blood back there in Kansas, and was let off for it. But shucks, I could always see the whites of that feller's eyes turnin' up when he teetered over backward and fell. Comin' to a rise, I seen the house was on fire. It wasn't nothin' but a shack of sidin' and shingles, and it burnt like a box. When I got there it was afire all over, and I run around it like a crazy feller, a-callin' for my wife.

"I didn't see her nowheres, and she didn't answer me. As I come around one corner I met a man, a tall feller, about a hundred-and-seventy-five pounds weight, from thirty-five to forty-five years old, black hair, black mustache, dark-skinned, with a long scar on his left cheek."

Smith recited these physical marks of identification slowly, gulping when he had done, and falling into a silence. After a while he resumed: "The light was on his face, and I'd know that feller if I met him in angel's wings on the corner of the square in the New Jerusalem. You know I said I didn't have no gun, but I clawed myself all over lookin' for one before I remembered, and that feller shot me while I stood there. The bullet went through my neck, and I reckon it'd 'a' killed a man that had as much brains as a fish. I tumbled over, and I didn't come to till the fire was burnt out and the ashes of it was blowin' over me like snow."

Smith got up, walked to the river-bank again, came back; sat in his accustomed place, took his pipe out, put it back again; turned the pipe slowly in his hands a heavy, silent while, then bent his head down to his drawn-up knees. I heard his sobs heaving as if to tear his bosom like smothered blasts, and moved away a little space from the fire. His sorrow was not mine to see.

Slowly, as some of our recollections come in ponderous, solemn waves, the cold wind from the mountains swept the whispering aspen trees. Little clouds, like sheep skipping before their warder, jumped the hurdle of the moon, now casting the huddled figure of the weeping man in shadow, now showering it with a benediction of light.

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"Shucks," said Smith, battering down his weakness, "she was in there. All they ever found was her weddin'-ring, and I've got that on a string around my neck right now. So you'll find me here when you come back, two years or twenty years, unless I run acrost that feller with the scar on his left cheek. I've found out who he is, and I know he'll come back when he thinks the thing's blowed over and I've left the country. He skipped out right after that night, when he found I didn't have brains enough to die like an ordinary man.

"It ain't only two days a-horseback from here to my old ranch, but them people up there, all but one friend of mine, don't know but what I've gone back to where I come from in the first place. I'm waitin' to hear from my friend that he's back, and then I'll go along up there and have a cleanin' out. I carry a gun now, as you've noticed. Not that I've ever had any use for it down here, 'cept to shoot a rattlesnake now and then."

Silence fell between us. Smith rested his jowls in his palms and bent forward, the firelight flickering on his stern, knitted face, and I, a weakling in these rough emotions of hate and vengeance, sat casting up in my mind one of the hardest problems chance had ever tossed me to be solved on short notice. Many minutes thus, Smith once or twice stealing a finger to the corner of his eye.

"Smith," said I, "while you were down in the lowlands after the horses along about sundown, a man came to camp to see if he could buy some coffee."

Smith wasn't interested. "Freighters," he grunted, "camped 'bout a mile below."

"No, this man's alone, and his camp for the night is up at the ford. He said he had come a long distance and his coffee had run out. I gave him a cupful of ground coffee, for we've got more than we'll need, and he said that would last him to his journey's end. He's got two days, horseback, ahead of him."

Smith sat up, removing his hat, placing it carefully beside him.

"He was a tall man," said I, "from thirty-five to forty-five years of age, about one hundred and seventy-five pounds weight, black hair, black mustache, dark-skinned; and he had a long, rough-edged scar on his left cheek."

Smith sprang to his feet. "Two men might look alike," said he, "but that might be the feller I want to meet! I'll go up and take a look at him."

He was off in an instant, leaving his hat upon the ground, even before I could frame a word to stay him. Still, that was as I had expected it would be. But in a moment I became greatly troubled. We can work out our answers to so many big things in this life so much better after we have fallen down on them, when the time for right action and right speech is forever gone. I saw more to the matter in that moment than mere justice to be administered in the primal fashion between man and man.

Suppose the man should kill Smith? Suppose it wasn't the guilty man at all, but so nearly like him that Smith would fall into error and take an innocent life? Granted that it was the person who had wronged Smith, what would happen when the body was found? Suspicion would point to Smith and me, we would be pursued, captured, convicted. A sweat broke from me; I lunged numbly after Smith, calling his name in a hoarse whisper. "Smith, Smith," I panted, "come back!"

Smith had passed fleetly into the darkness; he did not hear. Ahead of me I could see nothing but clumps of rank sage, the bent stem and dark blotch of a cottonwood here and there along the river's course. The ford was a good half-mile above our camp, and I felt that the deed would be done before I could reach the camp-fire of the lone traveler. I sank down upon the ground in a palsy of fear, a sickness of remorse. Thus I lay, listening for the shot. All the vast plain was silent. The aerial flocks had thickened and grown laggard in their flight, smothering the moon. A chill crept over me as I stretched, shudders wrenched my limbs, fear knocked at my temples. I listened, straining every sense.

Not a sound fell upon the night but the flutter of a wing in the brushwood now and then, the sonant rippling of the river over its shallows and along its endless curves. A dullness presently succeeded the acute tension of my senses. I got up, staggered back to the fire, heaped it with wood and sat near it, a chill in my marrow. What had I to do with Smith and the bloody deeds of that bleak, rough land that I need meddle and prejudice my own safety, liberty, perhaps life?

Smith came at last, silently, and sat oppo-

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site me in the firelight, drawing his breath hard, scooping the sweat from his forehead with the edge of his hand. I felt considerably relieved. Smith offered no explanation, and so, with what steadiness I could put into my voice, I asked: "Wasn't it the right man, after all?"

Smith looked at me, dully. "Yes, it was the right man," said he. We were silent again for a time, the fire snapping between us.

"But I didn't hear—anything," I complained.

"No," replied Smith, "I didn't shoot him."

His indirectness irritated me. I looked at him savagely. He was clasping and opening his strong hands as if hauling on an invisible rope.

"You didn't choke him, man, not with your bare hands!" I shuddered.

Smith laughed. "No," he answered, "I didn't choke him neither."

I grew calmer then. "Smith," I said, "tell me *what* you did. I passed the time you were away in torment."

Smith got to his feet. "What did I do to that catamount that burnt my wife alive in our little home? What did I do to that feller that tried to kill me, and that I've been a-layin' for ever since? Well, I'll tell you what I done to him! I let him go!"

Smith was marching back and forth, a little space before the fire. "You take a good look at me and then tell me what you think of me," he said. "Here you see a feller that's been wronged by a man as deep as one man can wrong another in this world. Here you see a feller that's carried the picture of the man that wronged him in his mind and in his eye for more than two years, prayin' to the Lord to hand that man over to him so he could shoot him dead —a little at a time to draw out his sufferin' and pay him back a part of what was a-comin' to him. And then when the time comes and this man is put down before him, this feller he puts up his gun and lets that man off without even a scratch on his hide!"

The sweat of his passion was blinding him, his jaw trembled. He sat down again, taking his hat curiously, as an unfamiliar object.

"I went on up there where he was camped. His horse was roped out a little this side, and he seemed to be asleep, his head on his saddle, face to the fire. It was still blazin' a little; I could see him plain. No mistake about him, it was the right man. But I couldn't shoot him asleep, no matter what he done. If I've got to send a man out of this world I want him to step out of it with his eyes open; then if he takes the wrong road to the next that's his fault, not mine. So I pitched a little chunk and hit him on the shoulder. He set up and grabbed his gun. I told him to throw it out in the brush, and he done it when he seen how matters stood.

"I went over to him and I said: 'I don't reckon you remember me.'

"But he did. He didn't deny that he was the feller neither, like I expected he would. He just set there as white as he'll ever be when he's dead, lookin' at the end of my gun.

"'What do you reckon I'm a-goin' to do to you, you murderin' wolf?' I says.

"'I reckon you'll shoot me when you git ready,' he says.

"'Don't you think you deserve it?' I ast him.

"'Shootin's too good and too easy for me,' he says. 'If you was to give me what I deserve you'd build up that fire, stake me over it and roast me to death a inch at a time. But even if you done that it'd be mercy to what I've suffered in them two years I've been away.'

"'Don't you try to come none of your rackets like that on me,' I says, 'or I'll take you up on that roastin' hint. What do you know about sufferin', and what do you care, you catamount!' I says.

"'Let me tell you something,' says he, 'and when I'm done tellin' you, go right on ahead and do whatever you're goin' to do, and git it over with quick. Two years ago I wouldn't 'a' talked to you this way. You know what I'd 'a' done then? I'd 'a' went down on my knees to you and begged for my life, begged like a pup, for I was a coward then, one of the onriest cowards that ever fired a sheep-wagon.

"'But I ain't no more—it's been burnt out of me. That pore woman on her bed of blazes didn't suffer what I have, for her agony was over in a little while. Mine gits worse all the time. A man can run away from the sheriff or a feller he's wronged, but they's something he can't run away from, something that's a hot iron in his brains, gittin' hotter and hotter the farther he goes and the faster he runs.

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"'It's roasted me till I look at that gun of yourn like a drowndin' man looks at a hand reachin' over the side of a boat to grab him. It's got sleep inside of it. Right in here,' he says, puttin' his finger on his forehead, 'is where the burnin' goes on all the time, and I want you to shoot me right where I've got my finger. I'd 'a' done it, long ago, but I didn't want to take away my last chance of eternal rest.'

"'No,' I says to him, 'you ain't a-goin' to git out of it as easy as that. I'm a-goin' to shoot you a little at a time, and come back here in the mornin' and settle you before I leave.'

"'All right,' he says, quiet enough, 'I'm ready whenever you air. It'll be a great relief to have it over with.'

"I thought he was a-runnin' a bluff, so I pretended to be thinkin' it over. 'I've changed my mind,' I says; 'I ain't goin' to shoot you at all; I'm goin' to hand you over to the sheriff and have you hung.' Then what do you reckon that feller done? Went down on his knees and begged me to shoot him, pointin' out the spot in his forehead where the fire was, beggin' and beggin' to be killed as hard as any man ever begged to be let live!

"Then I seen how it was, and I says to myself: 'The Lord has took from him more than I ever could 'a' took. The Lord has pulled down the blinds and shut the daylight of common sense out of this feller's soul, and if I was to kill him now I wouldn't kill a man; I'd just kill the hull of a man.' So I says to him:

"'I think I'll be livin' up to my promise to even up things with you better by lettin' you go than I could by killin' you. Go along home whenever you git ready,' I says, and put up my gun.

"He didn't say nothin', but kind of sunk down like a man that's been stabbed, and I come away."

While Smith talked, night had thickened appallingly. In a moment, without a warning flash, a torrential rain was beating upon us. Our fire was dashed out in a breath, our clothing soaked before we could grope our way to the wagon, where we sat under the stout canvas cover and listened to the roaring downpour. As suddenly as it began the storm ceased, but not until it had raged for half an hour or more.

Smith startled me by snorting a curse. "He was stringin' me!" said he. "He made a durned fool out of me!"

"Yes," said I, with a satisfied feeling that, even if I could not share his savage lusts I could at least sound depths beyond his primitive conception, "he played you one of the oldest tricks in the deck. That dodge is as old as reason in the human race. You know how savage people sit down and bow their heads for the death-stroke when their enemies swarm into the camp? Well, it's all a bluff, and it mostly goes. Not many men want to kill when they're invited to do it."

"You're right," said Smith. "I'm a-goin' on up there and finish him!"

"After thinking it over, I believe you'd just as well," said I. "This time I'm going with you."

I do not know why I felt that it was best for Smith to do this, or why I should be with him when he settled the score. But the cold rain seemed to have made something more of a man out of the indifferent material nature had thrown together in the semblance of one. Smith sprang from the wagon, I tumbled after him. The moon was smiling serenely as a deceitful woman who welcomes her husband upon the heels of her paramour. We said no more, but struck off up the river in a trot.

"You know that little pocket between them ledges up there by the ford?" said Smith.

I knew. It was a triangular space which wanted but a roof to be a house, its sheer walls some twenty feet in height.

"He's camped there. If we go up on this side of him we can't git away, 'less he saddled up and lit out as soon as I left."

As we drew near the spot Smith caught my arm. "Hold on!" said he, checking his gait and coming to a stand. "What's the matter with that gap?"

"He couldn't have covered it with a canvas," answered I; "he wouldn't have had one big enough, but it looks like that."

"It sure does," said Smith, "or like it had drifted full of snow."

We pressed on again, moving cautiously within ten yards of the mouth of the little gap between the ledges. More than ever it looked as if the wedgelike opening had been packed with snow to its top. "I know," said Smith, "it's a pile-up."

"A what?"

"A pile-up. A band of sheep stampeded

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in the storm and tumbled in there, the ones behind a-shovin' the ones in front till it was full. If they was any left—and I reckon they was, for all these here seems to be smothered—they run on over."

We examined the great heap of dead creatures, wondering whether the man we sought had taken flight before they came. Smith said that they tumbled over the precipice like a waterfall, it being the nature of sheep to stampede in a compact mass. The first ones in would not have time to get up and run out of the opening. Hundreds more would pack on top of them before they could move. It is a common disaster among sheep on the great ranges of the West.

"Well, if he's under there, they ain't no more for me to do," said Smith.

"How are we to know?" said I.

"In the mornin' the herders'll come along and drag 'em out for their hides," Smith explained. "We'll hang around and see."

We went back to camp, and I believe made out to sleep some between that and daybreak. With the sun we were back on the spot where the stampeding herd had drifted into the mouth of the rock. Three herders were ahead of us, dragging out the carcasses.

"You had a right smart of a pile-up here," ventured Smith.

The men worked on in stupid silence for several minutes. "Yes, we shore did," said one of them. Finally, "We lost nine or ten hundred in there."

"They was a feller camped in there last night," explained Smith. "That's what we come along up to see about. We was up here last night after the storm and seen they'd been a pile-up. We've been fishin' for a week down below."

The herders fell away from their task with sagging jaws and starting eyeballs. "You reckon he's under there now?" said one.

"Most likely he is, podner," was Smith's assurance.

They worked down to him in time, where he lay, flattened against the sand. His saddle was beside him, and the traces of his fire. Death had locked his fingers upon the fleece of a great ram; they were forced to cut away the wool before they could drag the creature's body out of the common trap of man and beast.

Smith stood looking down upon the battered form, its face pressed into the sodden sand. "*Sheep* done it," said he, awesomely, "and he died knowin' it was sheep! He died," he repeated, turning to me, "knowin' it *was* sheep. The Lord God A'mighty has his own way of settlin' things up. I take off my hat to the Lord."

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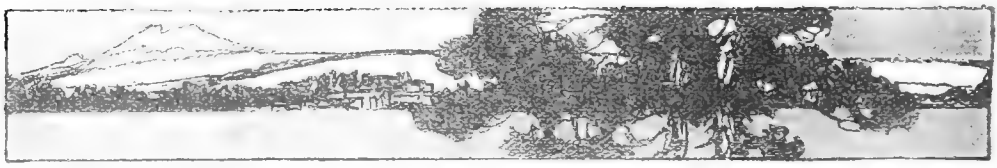

THE FISH-PIRATE

by Jonathan Hadley

POINT ROBERTS is a prong of land which hangs but a mile across the American Line; the Gulf of Georgia, to either side, sweeps north into British Columbia. The promontory is a virtual island, steep and dark and high, upon whose evergreen plateau lie scattering Iceland homesteads. Out from its base the fish-traps reach, like the spokes of a mighty wheel, and extend far over the surface in a chain of amphibious pastures.

Williams and Company's packing plant was a cluster of whitewashed buildings set up at the foot of the precipice. In the open ground behind them was a small structure which served as an office and store. On the stoop at the entrance, one Summer evening, sat Billy Perkins, the bookkeeper, shining the barrel of a rifle. His freckled face was more elliptical than its round outline prescribed, his cheerful mouth took a downward slant toward either side of his chin, and as if to shift his mind from under a burden, he looked away now and then across the water, while his gun slid from an inattentive hand.

The night before, he had followed the crowd to the beach to witness the "Chiny lodge," where Old Chu Bun, the toothless wretch, who by day dropped tin "chips" into cans of salmon, had become revealed as a Boxer priest. Kneeling before a little tissue-paper altar, in which a tiny point of flame was harbored, the Chinaman and his followers were surrounded by a circle of punk-sticks and candles. Into the bonfire they threw at intervals beautifully cooked fowls and sugar-cakes, and poured upon it libations of tea and gin.

The faces made a strange play for the firelight: behind the old man and his band of devotees, huge Scandinavians looked on with features gnarled by the sun and sea; diminutive, consequential Japs; South Americans; Indians, with papoose and squaw; Portuguese; Icelanders, with girls and women; Irishmen and Frenchmen.

Olga also had been there, and her eyes had spread with wonder as Billy ventured near her with the quaint syllables of information which he had gleaned from taciturn Chinese. Heretofore his tongue had always met paralysis in her presence; but on this night, in the weird surroundings, it was only quickened by the zest of his pulse. In all his haphazard life he never had been so thrilled. Raised by his own hand and schooled by gritty conditions, he had always shrunk from girls, for he had supposed that women, however humble, were to be sought with a charm of approach in which he was deeply defective.

Olga was the daughter of the post-master, the leading Iceland settler. Her skin was fair, and light blue eyes accompanied her golden hair; her figure had the Norse contour of health, yet it also had a litheness and distinction of carriage which set her off from all the other girls.

New possibilities, daring and buoyant, were unfolding themselves within Billy, when Olga had given a sharp little cry, and, wheeling about, he saw Erickson glaring at them. All the elements he had ever hated in the man, to the bookkeeper's mind, enshrouded him there as an aura. He was strangely dark for a Norwegian, and his expression was covert and mean; yet his intuitive knowledge of fish, of tides, of winds and "locations" made him, as trap-foreman, the most prominent personage on the Point. Olga, in extreme confusion, had slipped from Billy's side. She advanced almost at once to Erickson, and

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he, with none too amiable a greeting, had turned away with her.

Over and over again in his cot that night, Billy assured himself that he did not blame her—with Erickson the fish-boss and Olga's father the post-master. But reason would not dissolve the lump in his throat nor the vacuum in his heart.

Billy shook himself to readjust his thoughts. He picked up his gun once more and his polishing rag. Erickson, the fish-boss, was standing over him.

"Vat you doin' t'ere, Perkin?"

The speaker indicated the rifle in the bookkeeper's hand, and the others which were stacked behind him.

Billy surveyed him frigidly.

"Why," he responded, "I guess you can see. But anyhow," he continued, "I reckon you must know that they's somebody milkin' our traps. I've been watchin' the figgers very close on this preliminary run, and I find that this here gill-netter, Jensen, with his little smack and two-hundred-foot net, has been sellin' us more sockeyes than is reported in all our traps. I ain't for him holdin' up our watchmen no longer."

"V-e-e-ll," Erickson spoke deliberately, "t'e vatchmens carries guns ven I say so, and t'ey don't carry guns ven I don't say so. And *you*—I vish you mind your own —— business!"

Billy sprang to his feet, bursting with reply; but a flash of judgment caught the words and he strode hurriedly into the office. Reappearing, he carried in his hand a sheet of paper, which he held out for Erickson to read.

"Eat that, will you?"

The fish-boss studied it out. It was a letter from Mr. Williams, the owner, directing Perkins to supply all trap watchmen with the company rifles. Without any comment, the foreman stalked away.

During the week that followed the distribution of the rifles the fish reports were yet more disconcerting. The purchases from Jensen were out of all proportion to the catches from the traps.

"There is certainly a leak somewhere," pronounced the bookkeeper one afternoon as he sat in front of the store. "Even ol' Number Twelve ain't producin'—an' she's never failed us before." Abruptly he laid his figures down on the bench.

Three Iceland girls were sauntering past him toward the wharf. Olga was in the center. He had not seen her since the evening on the beach, and he had sworn to keep eternally clear of her. Frieda Anderson, noting him, halted the others.

Billy, to evade addressing them, picked up his paper once more and knitted his brow over the figures.

"Vell, Mr. Perkins," exclaimed Frieda, "vat you ban so gloam about?"

"Oh," he looked up suddenly, "how d'you do? Why—a—I was just a botherin' about a fish-pirate."

All three of the girls, with one ejaculation, moved toward him; Olga in particular showed alarm. Billy had opened up the most sensitive topic among the Icelanders. Two years before, the company had suffered from fish-poaching and Mr. Williams had become suspicious of the Iceland settlers. Olga's father pledged his word that the Icelanders never had been, nor ever would be, involved in poaching. However, Mr. Williams swore that if fish-stealing were resumed and he could not positively detect the culprits he would evict the colony.

The distress of the girls prompted Billy to add: "But it ain't none of your people—I'm positive about that."

"Oh," cried Olga, "why don't they *catch* him so that Mr. Williams will *know!*"

She was so agitated that Billy felt an irrepressible impulse to come to her aid. He stood up with a quick idea.

"I tell you," he returned, "jest to prove it, I'll go out and watch on Number Twelve myself to-night!"

"You!" The relief in Olga's voice and face Billy accepted as a full reward. His elation was entirely dispelled, however, by Frieda Anderson's question:

"Den you ain't coamin' to t'e dance to-night at t'e schoolhouse?"

He had heard of no dance—the word, when passed around, had not been conveyed to him. Erickson—he understood—had so managed it. Billy flicked a glance at Olga.

"No," he answered tersely.

Olga, with her eyes averted, gave no sign.

"No," he repeated, and turned about and walked moodily into the store.

II

ERICKSON, after supper, arrayed for the dance in a grotesquely fitting black suit under a celluloid collar, stood out at the end of the wharf watching the sunset.

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"Vind," he commented. "Dey be a big blow to-night."

"Erickson!"

The foreman looked around. On seeing Billy, his expression reflected his words:

"Vat in —— you want?" he said.

Billy answered with equal antagonism:

"I'm goin' to watch on Number Twelve to-night."

Erickson's sea-beaten skin grew redder; he could accept this as an insult to his watchman, or, if he became analytical, as an insult to himself. His fingers doubled. He gazed again, however, at the horizon, and checked the denial upon his lips.

Half an hour later Billy Perkins, in a heavy dory, was pulling out into the Gulf. In the bottom of the boat he carried a bucket of lunch, while over his shoulders was strapped a pair of strong field-glasses. As soon as he had cleared the bluff, a stiff cold wind beset him and he was barely able to proceed. At alternate moments, whitecaps piled over the gunwale, drenching him to the marrow. Standing up with his face to the bow, he was compelled to throw the whole of his strength against the sea.

It was entirely dark when he reached the shadowy netted piles of Number Twelve. And it became narrow business, too, to work his way in the bouncing dory around the "Pot" to the ladder. He made it fast beside the boat of the watchman then on duty and climbed to the top of the enclosure. The forty-foot square of netting into which the long straight arms of the trap converged was capped by a slim footboard, and none too securely Billy made his way by it to the little watch-house.

On the single seat inside, Pete Helgerson was dozing—his head dropped heavily upon his enormous chest. A lantern hung by a nail was driven into one of the splintery boards. Dirty magazines and obsolete newspapers cluttered the floor—and these, with Helgerson's feet, expended the space.

"Wake up there, Helgerson!" Billy shook him roughly.

The man's eyelids parted and he gazed incredulously. The looks of the two men clinched, for their sentiments toward each other had been focused through Erickson.

"G'wan ashore!" commanded Perkins. "I'm watchin' this here trap to-night!"

The Norwegian did not move.

"Oh," Billy added with a penetrating sneer, "Erickson said you might; and——"

The wind interrupted him with a high penetrating wail. Helgerson rose—he could not straighten out in full his extraordinary length—and turned up the collar of his coat; after which, he put on his slicker.

"Vell, you *can*," he said, "on a night like t'is!"

Billy hung to the door while the watchman stepped beyond him and vanished in the gloom. He entered and sat down.

Helgerson's words, with singular persistency, rang in his ears; and every screech of the wind respoke them. For he had realized from the moment that he had first been struck by the heavy weather that his determination to watch that night was unwarranted. No fish-poachers, in such conditions, would venture abroad to be dashed and entangled among the traps. Number Twelve was rocking now upon its flabby piling, creaking and groaning in competition with the gale; while the big black rolls of water beneath him were bursting into cream against the netting. The drafts were piercing his wet skin through the cracks of the shed.

He was greatly disturbed, in addition, at the thought of Erickson's prompt compliance with his proposal. However, he remembered that the company's tug, the *Alice*, always gathered up the watchmen when the seas began to run.

It was an hour, perhaps, before the sound for which his ears had been held constantly alert flitted its way through the tempest—the long chime whistle of the *Alice*. He traced her pitching lights patiently on their difficult rounds from trap to trap. His own turn was last.

Billy clutched at his seat, his heart stood motionless. Was the *Alice* heading ashore? He rose on trembling legs and snatched the lantern; clinging to a support outside, he waved it frantically. The steamer floundered on. She was almost past him now and Billy shouted with all his physical reserve. But the hurricane picked up the notes and flung them scornfully above his head. His hand came down for an instant's rest—and he threw the lantern from him. The light had been snuffed out.

When Billy groped his way back into the watch-house his mind was as numb as his body. Yet some subsconscious prodding

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caused him to realize that there was an alternative left. He must take the chance; and presently he found himself crawling over the footboard to his boat. After passing slowly around the slippery, lurching framework he encountered the ladder. He discovered the rope and braced himself for a pull—but almost tumbled backward with the jerk. *A short piece of line, chafed in two, was all that came up!*

Back in the watch-house, miserably soaked and chilled, Billy attempted to order his feelings. A sense of ineffable loneliness enveloped him. He had always known personal loneliness—the want of temperamental companionship, but there was now an acutely physical rift. Men had been sufficiently harsh with him, and he had experienced little affection, but he had never conceived before of the hollowness of isolation. He had embarked upon this undertaking in response to his love, he confessed, for a girl; but the thought of her as Erickson's partner at the dance was enough to extinguish his purpose.

"Well," he said, and his voice was unreal and dry, "I guess he's got me after all." Yet this admission brought with it, he found, a release from protest and tension, and he fell into an exhausted sleep.

He opened his eyes at an exceptional gust whose pressure against the wall had all but tipped him from his seat. He could see no farther then the length of his arm, but that was far enough to comprehend the fury of encircling forces. The blasts were combining into winding, whirring screams; and the waves into avalanches. Nevertheless his mind was altered now and he was strangely calm. He did not seem to care what they might do to his slender support, nor what they might do to him. His spirit was the one still entity among the elements.

Therefore it was simple, mechanical instinct which caused him to spring from the watch-house and, falling, clasp the footboard. A second later the little building plunged into the "Pot" below!

He had worked himself around to a corner where he could stretch more easily, before he realized what he had done. He smiled weakly. He perceived that he would continue to hang on like this—continue to seize for existence; but he was aware that in the course of time his hands would be loosened by the storm and he would slip, with his own consent, into the black and churning darkness.

III

DAWN breaks early on the Gulf of Georgia. The northern latitude, in Summer, confines the night to a few short hours. Billy lifted his head from a stupor and stared about him. Half frozen, he was scarcely able to make the movement. He felt a pull at his waist and, looking down, saw that he had wound the loose end of a net-rope around the board and his body. He vaguely wondered why.

The morning view—if it had mattered to him now—was one to appall him. The gale was growing wilder; the sky was blown entirely clean of clouds, and the sun was bright, though totally without warmth. It cast a frigid, mocking glare upon the earth and water. The purple hills of the San Juan Islands still remained beneath that curious haze, and that meant wind, more wind. The roll of the waves was astonishing—waves as great as a steamer came, so streaked and whipped with suds and foam that the water had changed to a pallid green. Under the bookkeeper the surface dropped fifteen or twenty feet in a trough; then a hill of water would smash through the trap. Each time, the piles attempted to uproot themselves, but, in the froth-flecked hollow of the wave again, they lunged back to complete the arc.

Seven o'clock. Billy did not know how the time had gone, but the sun showed him the hour. He had supposed that the trap would have broken up by this time. His wretchedness caused him to wonder whether or not he should wait for it. He was fumbling, meanwhile, with the rope which held him. He managed to unwind one turn, but was compelled to pause for strength.

Off in the distance, above the fused white buildings his eye caught the movement of a flag, dropping and rising quickly on the flag-pole. He worked the glasses, still strapped to his shoulder, around to where he could use them.

In front of the wharf, at every dolphin, the company's fleet were moored with single bowlines, to give them their own angle for mounting the waves. The wharf with every comber was lurching also, yet Billy saw that it was lined with people. There was Brainard, the cannery-foreman,

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with glasses trained upon him, frantically waving a piece of sail-cloth; Chin Bing, the China Boss; fishermen, machinists, Orientals, in great excitement, pointing at him. It touched his deadened senses to make out old Gee Yip, the head can-stacker, throwing sheets of devil-money into the sea.

It touched him, but he found that that was all. These people were as something separate, cut off and left behind, somehow, in a condition which he cared not to resume.

Once more he reached back for the rope, though with one hand he still applied the glasses. The shift caused him to tilt them upward and his sight became leveled at the brink of the precipice. His loose hand suddenly flew to the other's aid in poising the instrument.

On the edge of the cliff stood Olga. She was braced against the violence of the wind, gazing into the Gulf. Her fair hair streamed behind her—her garments, too, so that it seemed indeed that she were flying. She formed the picture of a legendary story he had read—the incarnation of some ancestral Valkyrie, riding upon the storm.

There was a warm flood back to Billy's heart, a reawakening of spirit. He watched as if his eyes were bolted to the rims. A terrific blast tore up a tree behind her, hurling it over the brink. She gave it an instantaneous glance, then faced again to the sea. This squall demolished also the "Heart" and "Jigger" of Number Twelve, throwing about the piles like kindling. Abruptly Olga fell to her knees, her hair still streaming behind her, her hands clasped to the sky.

Billy could see no more for the tears which came between him and the lenses. Power, however, seeped into his muscles and energy into his mind. With wonderfully greater ease he rewound the net-rope about him.

When he lifted the glasses again they fell upon the cannery. He saw at once that Captain Olufson and his crew, brutally flung about in a dory, were working out to where the *Alice* was moored. A superb Norwegian character was Olufson, and Billy knew that if courage and seamanship could reach him, Olufson would do it. And yet the *Alice* was only a bauble in such a sea!

As a man in the dark would move on his way by the touch of a railing, so Olufson felt a path for the *Alice* through the zones of wind and breakers. Only a sea-given instinct could accomplish it; mere intelligence could not. It was an hour, however, before the tugboat had succeeded in placing herself to the windward of Number Twelve. Olufson's plan was to sweep close by with the weather and fling out a line from his bow; then pray that it would not pull up the piles nor break when the tug swung around.

The bookkeeper, freeing himself, stood up and clasped the lantern-pole. Even with his new virility, he found that he was distressingly weak. His blood, as it struggled through him, was laden with inertia. And yet, as he waited, with that final effort to which an individual may rise, he endowed his sinews with mental strength. He was aware, as the tug came plunging toward him, that one cast of the line was all that could be attempted. They could not work back in the face of the hurricane.

A deck-hand in the bow, with a coiled heaving-line in his hand, was clinging to the capstan. Dangerously close drove Captain Olufson. A shout—they were alongside—and the line came circling at him! Billy seized it. An instant later he was fainting—the rope had slipped through his hand!

But the deck-hand had calculated the chances; instead of throwing the line to be caught, he aimed for it to fall across the footboard. A frantic yell pierced Billy's lethargy. With a dive he dropped upon it; then he succeeded in pulling in to him the larger hawser to which it was attached and sliding it over a cleat. The tug swung around and a fortunate wave submerged the propeller at the instant it was needed to take hold.

Hand over hand the bookkeeper made the passage. The rope tried every medium to cast him off; it buried him under the water; it snapped him far above. But with superhuman tenacity he made his way.

IV

WHEN Billy awoke, after the second day in bed, he felt as though he had returned to himself. He set in to do some definite thinking—and decided that he must hold his peace. For Erickson, he understood, had disclaimed all knowledge of his being on the trap, and had ordered the *Alice* not to call at Number Twelve because Helgerson had come ashore. Billy

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knew that Helgerson would swear to anything that Erickson might say. He had no way of proving that he had talked with the fish-boss, in the face of the latter's denial.

Rising to dress himself, he discovered that he was still very feeble; nevertheless, a man is not allowed to be sick, nor even to die, when "the run" begins. He shuffled out of his little bedroom and opened the door of his store and office.

An area of bright sunshine fell on the floor, and the morning breath of the sea relieved the dingy smell of groceries and tobacco. Billy, awkwardly applying the broom to the dust behind the counter, was startled on looking up to behold that Olga was in the store. She carried a market-basket on her arm, and yet she was alone. She seldom came to the store alone.

She advanced close up to the counter and hesitated. Then, lowering her voice to earnestness, while her eyes shone with a misty brightness she said:

"I was—*so* afraid!"

All the fiction of embarrassment fell away from Billy now; for his vision passed through the quiet girl to the Valkyrie of the storm.

"Olga," he exclaimed unsteadily, "I know it, and it was the only thing that saved me. I had glasses—I saw you on the cliff."

Starting, she turned her deeply coloring cheeks away.

"Olga," cried Billy vehemently, "what under the sun can you see to like in that—that—Erickson? He—he—well, I don't see how you can stand fer him!"

Her hands came suddenly up to her face; there was an ungovernable catch in her voice, as she responded:

"We are engaged."

Billy blanched. He endeavored to speak, but the words congealed in his throat. In the end, however, he broke forth:

"But, Olga, if you only *knew*—that is—Say, Olga, you ought to call it off!"

She shook her head from behind the handkerchief in which her eyes were now hidden.

"We are engaged," she repeated, with an audible sob.

From the window he followed her steps as she went up the rugged pathway and disappeared over the bluff. Then he slammed the door on the sunlight and, shambling into his office, sat down on a box to roll a cigarette. He understood it all. That he could not change her mind he knew; for he would have to change the mind of that horny-handed old aristocrat, her father. And he surmised that if the post-master should learn of Erickson's attempt to drown him he would be exercised only because it had failed.

Brainard, the cannery-foreman, poked his face in at the door.

"Hey, Billy," he said, "here's to-day's count from Jensen's gill-net sloop. Make out the check for 5,831 sockeyes."

"What?" shouted Billy, so explosively that Brainard fell backward. "Did you say 5,831?"

"Yep; that's the count. Makes a pile of money, too, with 'em goin' at two-bits apiece."

"Come here!" Billy dragged the foreman into the office and beat with his fist upon a sheet of paper. "These," he exclaimed, "is the trap figgers—just 4,600 reported by all our watchmen this morning!"

"——queer," commented Brainard, "but then it couldn't possible be piratin', because Erickson himself was out in the patrol launch last night." The foreman did not understand Billy's quick, ecstatic laugh, as he wheeled around to his desk.

"Here's Jensen's check," he answered in a moment, handing over the slip of paper. "It's $1,465.50."

As soon as the canneryman had withdrawn, the bookkeeper, with his mirth entirely vanished, seized the telephone.

"Long Distance!" he called, yet his words traveled twenty-five miles around Boundary Bay before reaching the operator. "Give me the Kulshan National Bank of Bellingham!"

"Eleven thousand dollars he's got," he mused, "but he ain't had no chance to cash the checks. Hello—Kulshan National? This is Williams and Company of Point Roberts. Have you cashed any checks made out to Oluf Jensen? No? Well, don't honor any until further notice."

He then ordered his wire to be connected with the Blaine telegraph office and dictated a message to Mr. Williams in Seattle, which requested the owner to start immediately for Point Roberts.

V

THAT evening when Billy had drawn up a small dory under the dock he bored two holes in the free-board, one on each side of the bow-post. Then he threw a

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strip of old canvas into the bottom. By half-past nine he concluded to set forth and was soon rowing out into the stream.

Pushing along for more than a mile, Billy stopped at some distance north of Number Twelve. The trap had been repaired since the storm and, while still incomplete, was ready for fishing. The bookkeeper drew in his oars, lay down in the bow of the boat, and pulled the canvas over him. Gazing through the auger-holes, he found that he had calculated precisely; the tide, coming down from Boundary Bay, was carrying him toward the "Jigger" of Number Twelve. Passing along in a steadily moving sea of glass, his little port-holes showed him every object with distinctness.

The boat bumped into a pile and a section of the net. He cautiously looked up from his shelter and saw that he lay in the stygian shadow of the moon. Carefully and silently, he worked the dory forward until he had a good view of the "Pot" and "Spiller." Then he lay down again.

It was not until after midnight that his ear was arrested by any unusual sound, but there came to him then the puff of a gasoline boat, advancing at quarter-speed.

"The *Silverhead*," he whispered.

As she drew closer he was able to recognize the patrol launch, and—his whole body tightened—she was towing Jensen's fishing-smack!

He seized the glasses he had brought and raised them to the edge of the gunwale. There was a figure standing in the bow of the launch, and he waited without breathing as she came on while her white prow slit the surface, turning over smooth, phosphorescent rolls which gleamed behind her like an electric trail.

Clearly defined in the moonlight now, the figure was shown to be that of Erickson. A dozen men hastily appeared on deck.

"The watchmen!" exclaimed Billy.

While the *Silverhead* and the sloop were made fast, two of the men rowed to a nearby dolphin for a "pot-scow." The others had lowered the netting so that the scow could be pushed into the enclosure; after which, they leaped down upon it and, by coiling the netting up from under it, soon had several thousand lashing salmon bottled in one corner. Erickson threw down some dip-nets (Billy knew that he dare not use the steam-brailer), and the men fell to scooping the catch aboard the scow.

Billy silently pushed away from the "Jigger" and rowed his boat to the shore.

At breakfast time, next morning, he remained at the store until he was certain that every watchman had, as usual, stacked his rifle in front of the office. Then he locked them carefully inside. Pondering as to the best manner for uncovering the facts—for Mr. Williams would be due at the cannery that morning—he entered the large mess-room.

The sight of Erickson, however, spading up vast quantities of mush and milk, was extremely irritating to him. With eyes significantly half-closed, on taking his seat he said: "You're squeezin' this company fer about all that can be got out of it, ain't you? But don't think that I ain't wise."

The spoon fell from the foreman's hand and there was a sharp stir among the watchmen scattered at the long tables. Nevertheless, there was no response.

VI

OLGA, descending the leaf-strewn path with her basket over her arm, saw a little knot of men ahead of her where the trail ran out past the bunk-house. A name that they were speaking was borne to her. She stopped. Still screened by the foliage, she listened, and her countenance grew ashen.

Treading softly out of the path, avoiding twigs and crisp dry leaves, she passed behind the long, low shelter of the bunk-house. At the other end the way was open and she darted forth. Springing through the door of the store, she exclaimed:

"Oh, Mr. Perkins, I think—think—they'll kill you!"

Billy, behind the counter, appeared with a jaw set like the door of a safe; but his eyes became very gentle as he looked at the panting girl.

"Olga, I won't never forgit this! But don't you worry. Jest go on home; I'm all right."

Her lips trembled at his words, but some of his coolness, nevertheless, imparted itself to her; whereupon her manner changed, and she looked at him with a dawning defiance.

"I won't!" she said.

Billy was too alarmed for her safety to feel the leap of his heart.

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"But, Olga," he implored, "you *got* to go——"

"I won't!" she stamped her foot. "I shall stay right here!"

A murmur of voices could be heard before the office. Billy hastened toward them, but when he came to the door he shoved his hands into his pockets and nonchalantly sauntered out on the platform. Erickson and a dozen men stood on the ground before him. Their expressions were too tense for Billy to ignore.

"Well," he spoke with all the scorn his lips could frame, "and what do you want?"

Erickson stepped forward; he scarcely could reduce his rage to words.

"Ve vant you keep your —— mouth shut, or ——"

"Yes?"

"Or ve brack your neck!"

Billy had deeply resolved to maintain a contemptuous calm; but at Erickson's words his blood leaped in his veins.

"Oh, you will, will you!" he yelled, tearing off his coat and grabbing up a strip of pipe. "Come on—try it—all of you, but put Erickson in front! Come *on!*"

He was raving with belligerence. The men, thoroughly fired by his taunts, had spread somewhat for more circumference; then, with telepathic unity, they started.

"*Stop!*" It was a woman's voice. "Stop right there!"

Olga stood in the doorway, grasping a watchman's rifle. The fishermen, weak with astonishment, caved back; Erickson's eyes all but bounded from his head.

"No!" cried Olga again at their retreat. "You stand right there! Mr. Williams will be here in a moment."

The whistle of the owner's private yacht was wafted in from the Gulf.

Mr. Williams polished his glasses several times as he approached the company store. His bookkeeper on the platform, clutching a strip of lead pipe, was confronting his trap-foreman and night watchmen — who were themselves standing motionless before a rifle in the hands of an Iceland girl. As he hurried forward, he halted a moment to decide whom he should address. But Olga settled the point. To Erickson, who was opening his mouth, she said, particularizing her aim:

"Keep still!"

"Mr. Williams," Billy blurted out swiftly, "this trap-foreman of yours and your night watchmen are a perfectly organized band of fish-pirates! I've tracked 'em down. They've been selling you daily loads of salmon out of your own traps and they've robbed you of eleven thousand dollars!"

Mr. Williams turned pale.

"But you don't lose nothin'," he hastened. "I stopped payment on the checks."

It was several moments before the owner's mind could cover the situation. Then he sent Brainard, who had followed him from the wharf, for the crew of machinists, to take charge of the fishermen.

"Mr. Perkins," he directed himself at length to Billy and spoke with characteristic impulse, "you've got no business being cooped up over a set of books! You are now assistant trap-foreman; and when you've learned anough about fish, the principal job is yours!"

Billy leaned back against the door-post, mute with surprise.

"Of course, I want to make you a present," continued Mr. Williams, taking out his check-book, but he stopped abruptly:

"Pardon me, Miss Olga," he bowed to her, "for not acknowledging you sooner. You should be rewarded first." Speaking to himself, and yet aloud, the proprietor said, "What can I give her?"

Olga's head had fallen at his words, to screen her crimson cheeks. Billy straightened up. After two affrighted starts, he went on:

"Give her your assistant trap-foreman!"

Mr. Williams managed to divert into a cough the laughter which sprang to his lips; but at sight of the bookkeeper's wistful, unsophisticated face, he became very sober.

"I never shall have greater pleasure in bestowing a gift," he said, "if the lady——?"

He glanced at Olga. She raised her eyes at his inquiry, but in her confusion dropped them again. And yet, the action had accomplished a nod.

Mr. Williams rubbed his glasses once more—not this time, however, because he failed to understand.

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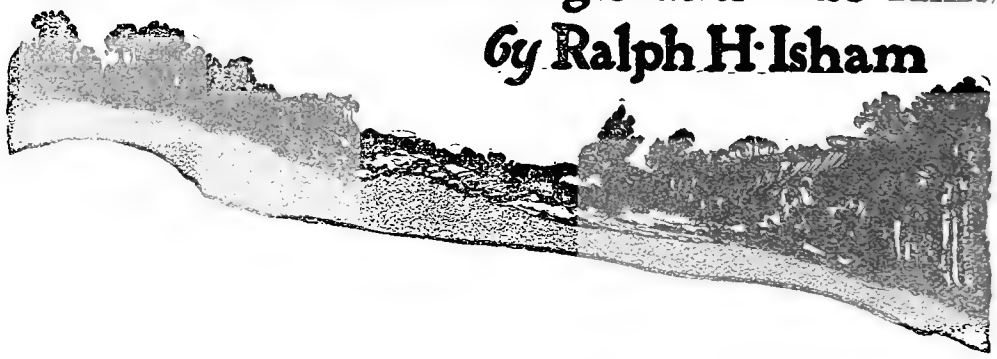
In the Jungle after Seladang

The Newest and Most Dangerous of Wild Game

By Ralph H. Isham



EDITOR'S NOTE: Early in June of the present year the noted American hunter and globe-trotter who is the contributor of this tale of adventure arrived in New York from the other side of the world. He encountered some remarkable experiences; his trophy-trunks were filled with heads, skins, specimens and curios that for some days drew a curious crowd to the hotel where he makes his New York headquarters. Of these specimens some were secured by big museums, others have gone to add to his collection in his home. Of them all the most interesting were five heads of a big game the hunting of which is entirely new to sport—the seladang of the Malayan East Indies. It has long been thought that the mbogo, or African buffalo, was the most dangerous of all beasts to hunt, but recent reports from the East, coupled with Mr. Isham's experiences and the sad fate of his fellow hunter, Major Sayre, of the British army, make it nearly certain that the seladang is quite as delicate a proposition to stalk.

NOT long ago an eminent officer of the Royal Geographical Society remarked that, with all our explorations and research, the civilized nations of the earth had barely scratched the surface of a great body of information concerning many parts of the world and that millions of square miles of lands were really unknown.

The East Indies have long been familiar as a whole. Their water lines are all beautifully charted down and every scrap of their vast extent is duly under the Dutch, English or some other flag. There is also a great beaten path through them by way of Singapore and a steamship company which touches at more than two hundred ports in the region. Nevertheless I found, when I got into it, that there are splendid reaches of virgin territory, large aboriginal tribes, not yet seen by the white man, and animals, plants and natural phenomena that are not set down in the books of the scientists. For any man seeking adventure there is, I venture to say, no more enticing spot on the face of the earth.

When I reached Singapore I had been hearing vague tales of the seladang—a huge, unknown, dangerous beast in the far interior, but I had no thought of setting out to hunt for one. Then I met a Mr. Fowler, an American, who after a series of strange adventures had actually killed two of these strange monsters in the heart of the Malay Peninsula. I determined to have a look at one, even though I might not be lucky enough to get a head to bring back—or to bring back my own, for that matter, considering the natives' pleasant little tribal custom of collecting souvenirs of that kind.

The seladang is a very rare animal, or rather a very rare variety of the buffalo family, and is a cousin to the mbogo or African buffalo, the Cape buffalo, the buffalo of the Indian jungle, and the carabao of the Philippines. He has two marks of wide distinction. The first is his size, which is enormous. One specimen I secured measured six feet seven inches to his shoulder top. The second point is the amusing shape of his legs. Probably as a protection against insects, leeches, reptiles or cutting edges of grass-blades or thorn-points, there are heavy folds of flesh which run from shoulder to

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hip down to the hoof, giving him the appearance of one of Hogarth's caricatures of fat men.

Now the inexperienced man would say that a beast with legs like the seladang's would be very slow in covering the ground, in fact would do well to get out of a walk. The uncomfortable truth is that, for all his bulk and huge legs, the seladang gets about with the agility of a deer; to escape by fleeing straight before him would be impossible except for a mounted man. When he charges it is like the terrible charge of a rhinoceros. He crashes straight through the growth in front of him, breaking small trees, rending entangling vines and laying wide open a path in the brakes as if a forty-ton locomotive had plowed through.

Acting on the advice of Fowler, we took with us the heaviest arm we were able to get, a double-barreled express rifle, a 600 Cordite, and exceptional care was taken of the ammunition, for the character of the country is ruinous to any sort of cartridge, especially if paper-shelled.

From Singapore the journey to the interior of the Malay Peninsula was rather unique in itself. Leaving the steamer at Port Swettenham (named for the official who had such an unfortunate experience with the American navy at the time of the Kingston earthquake), we went inland on a train of the queer little railroad in cars whose extremely low roofs project like decorative eaves. We stayed with that railroad till it ceased to exist, and it ceased to exist at Kuala-Lumpur. Now Kuala-Lumpur means "mouth of Lumpur river," and Lumpur means "mud," and in all geographic nomenclature never has a name been so aptly affixed. The place was mud, mud, mud—houses, people, food, roads, water, everything.

Thence we set out for Ruab on the Government's experimental bus, and then took to bullock-carts that eventually brought us to Kula-Lipis on the Penang River, where I secured a huge dugout with a savage-looking crew. And here we said farewell to civilization even in its faintest forms.

For two weeks we paddled along the Penang River, seeking vainly at every native village for news of any seladang whatever, and at last reached a stream called by the natives the Krau.

Never have I seen an aboriginal people quite so much like monkeys. They wear no clothing except a twist of skin about the loins; their arms and legs are monkey-like, and their regular diet is monkey-meat—which may have had an atavistic effect upon them. This food they secure by the rather unpleasant means of poisoned arrows shot from a section of bamboo used as a blowpipe, and when the monkey drops they make him safe and sanitary by pouncing upon him and hastily scooping out with a sharp stone the wounded part in which the poison has begun to spread. The rest they eat quite confidently.

Where they secure all the poison they use on their arrows I was never able to find out. It is not from poisonous snakes, for we saw very few cobras. (Also, speaking of snakes, we saw only one boa-constrictor, which, as it chanced, had just caught and swallowed a Malayan deer and was dormant. We cut him in half and brought away his hide.)

Besides the blow-gun, a stone ax with a twisted rattan handle is their only other effective weapon, but even with these primitive tools they are not to be despised. Their head-hunting and curing process is identical with that of other Malay tribes.

In some of the settlements the natives are not pure Sakis, the Sakis being the aboriginal people, but I visited one on the Krau River (really at Ulukrau, which means "source of the Krau") that was absolutely untouched. The people had never seen the face of a white man before and at first feared us. Unfortunately, when they saw that we were merely men they grew bolder rapidly, and never for a moment did we dare drop our guard.

At last, during our second day on the Krau River, we heard that a seladang had actually been seen by a native. The native's observations had been brief and limited. Having no weapon but his blowpipe, he had promptly climbed a tree, and thus escaped by swinging, monkey-like, from one tree to the next. However, he remembered where he had got into his trouble and we set out in pursuit of our first seladang.

We were two days on his trail and at last I was successful in striking it fresh. I followed slowly, cutting my way every step with a heavy knife. Despite my heavy boots and puttees the leeches had got in at my legs and left scars before they were through that will remain with me for some time to come.

Cautiously we proceeded in the intense

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silence of the heart of the jungle until a sign from one of the boys restrained me and we paused and listened. There was a soft crunching and grinding sound not far ahead and the natives averred that this was the seladang chewing his cud.

The noise of cutting the branches and creepers would now have been dangerous, so down I went on my stomach and crept forward under the growth. At last I caught a glimpse through an opening of a spot of black hide about as big as my hand. Never having seen one of the animals before and having no accurate means of judging what portion of his anatomy it might be, I blundered into the conclusion that it was the flank by the heart and gave him one ball, holding the other barrel for a charge.

It was very far from a vital spot, I learned later, and in an instant there was a very mad and very eager seladang crushing the brakes ahead of me and seeking some hint of the source of his hurt. In doing so he gave me two good looks at him and, having reloaded, I fired twice.

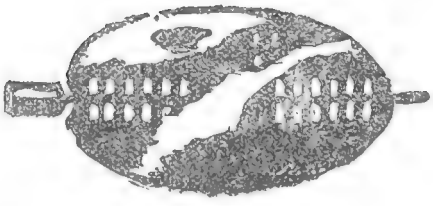
Both shots struck him, but served only to enrage him the more, and now he knew where I lay. I had time to throw in only one cartridge before he came, but this time I struck him fairly and he went down, bellowing in his death-agony.

Before the end of my expedition, four more seladangs fell to my lot, and in each case I was equally fortunate. It is to Captain Sayre's experience that we must turn for a true guide to the danger in hunting this new big game.

Captain Sayre left camp with three men and proceeded for several hours in the direction in which a seladang had been reported and at last caught sight of the big beast feeding quietly in a hollow. He crept up to the brink of the depression and, taking careful aim, fired for the neck, hoping to reach the cervical vertebræ. His shot only plowed through the flesh on top of the shoulder and, with a bellow of rage, the seladang plunged off in the opposite direction. With all the rapidity that he could combine with due caution, Captain Sayre followed the animal, the trail being very plainly marked, until he struck an open space. There he took quite some time before advancing, knowing that the seladang might be in waiting in the gloom of the jungle just on the other side.

What the animal had really done was to go ahead at a terrific speed and then to circle the spot just as a bird-dog or a wolf will do to pick up the hunter's scent. When he found it he began to stalk the hunter, who at last proceeded across the glade only to hear a wild cry of alarm from his gunbearer, who was in the act of scuttling up a tree. The next instant the seladang came crashing out of the jungle just behind him. Captain Sayre turned and fired, but the heavy 600 ball struck in the base of the massive horns and never even caused the big brute to hesitate in his furious charge.

In the fraction of a second he was on the unfortunate man and drove the long sharp horns into his body time and again. At last, when he had almost torn the man apart and nearly stamped him into the ground with his hoofs and knees, he desisted and made off. The natives then ventured down and brought the mangled remains into camp.



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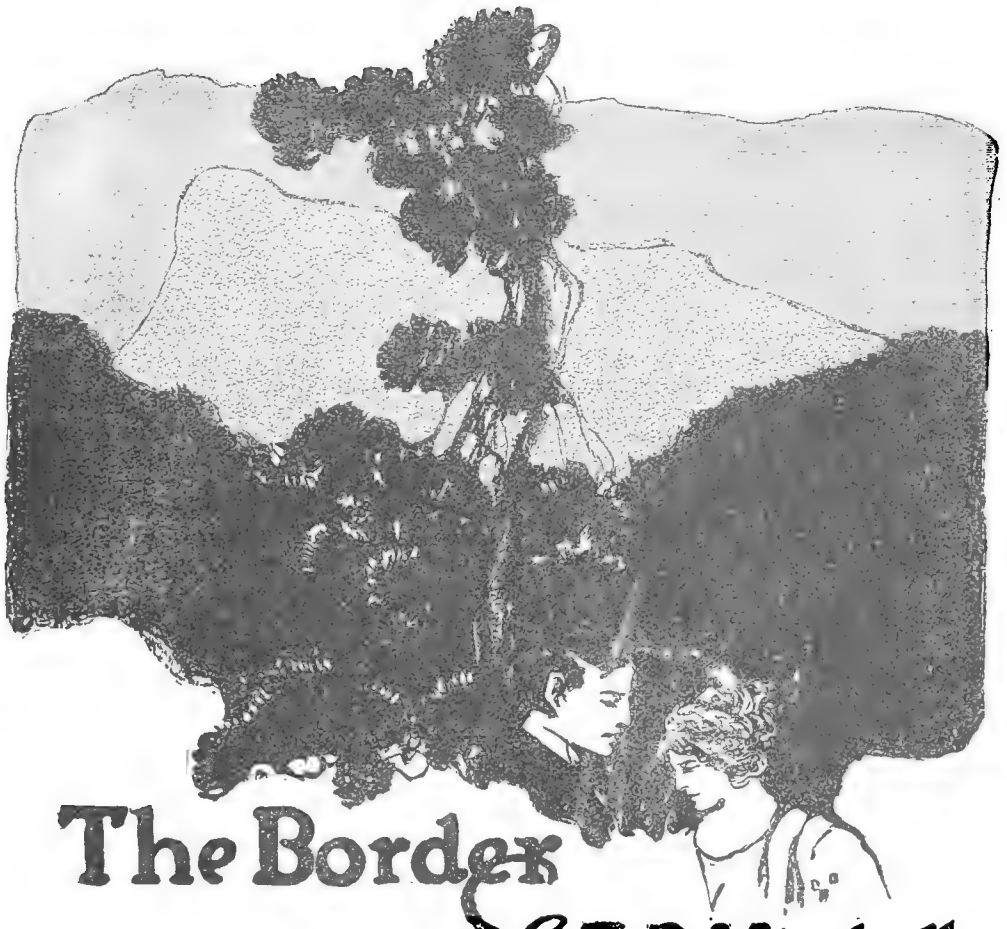

The Border

by E. B. Mitchell

CHAPTER I

INSULTS AND OUTRAGES

"SCANDALOUS! Perfectly scandalous!" Lady Berwick dropped her two-day-old copy of the London *Times* upon her teacup and looked at her companion in mild surprise.

"I beg your pardon," she said. "What did you say?"

"It is scandalous," repeated the elder woman. "Simply outrageous!"

Lady Berwick cast a startled glance behind her, saw no visible outrage, and turned back to rescue the *Times* from the buttered toast on which it had fallen. For an instant she surveyed the stout figure on the other side of the little tea-table, the heavy face flushed with righteous indignation, the stiff black bonnet fairly bristling with insulted dignity; then her eyes left the woman to sweep the fair Tyrolean valley.

The afternoon sun was sinking behind the rock wall of Tofana and the long shadows lay like a blessing on the fields of the peasants. But its rays still lingered on the mountain pinnacles that guarded the green valley and towered boldly up into the soft blue above. The jagged rocks were flaming red now. At their base dark belts of larch stretched down to the steep pastures dotted with farmsteads and white ribbons of road winding here and there among them.

The village at the foot of the steep hill on

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which the hotel stood was already in the shadow. From the white stucco walls and brown roofs of its houses rose the slender campanile, and the sound of its bells came upward over the fields where short-skirted women were tossing their scanty crops of hay.

On the terrace of the hotel, at the edge of the woods, the sunlight still lay. The stiff row of flowers across the driveway was bathed in it, the tea-table was bathed in it, the whole hotel, slumbering in its afternoon peace, was steeped in it. From the rock solitudes of the mountains came no sound; the larches rustled in the light breeze and the bells of the campanile tolled softly.

Lady Berwick turned back to her companion. "I see nothing scandalous," she said quietly. "I think it very lovely."

"Lovely!" With a snort of anger the other took up her cup and gulped its contents. Afternoon tea was a novelty she did not appreciate, but its consumption was obviously a social duty; no one could say that Mrs. Henry Watson ever shirked her duty. "Lovely!" she repeated "I call it unbearable."

"But—" Lady Berwick's bewildered gaze rested again upon the smiling calm at their feet. Suddenly inspiration came. "Of course one can't expect really good tea in Austria," she remarked philosophically. "Still, it's not so bad."

"Tea!" snapped Mrs. Watson. "Tea, indeed! I am talking of decency."

"My goodness!" The abused *Times* dropped once more upon the toast as the startled woman sat bolt upright. "But my dear Mrs. Watson, you can't mean that. It's not unbearable at all. Really it's quite necessary, you know. What would we do——"

"I don't know what you are talking about. You may be willing to put up with it, but I am not. I have never been accustomed to such things and I do not propose to tolerate it. In fact I consider it my duty to my daughter to remonstrate."

She glared past the other's shoulder with such militant virtue that Lady Berwick felt compelled to twist her somewhat portly form about in the narrow chair to follow the direction of her eyes. The figure of a girl was just vanishing within the doorway of the hotel. The man who had accompanied her remained outside, leaning on his alpenstock and drinking in the beauty of the valley with the satisfaction of the strong man who is tired.

There was no doubt that he was strong. The *rucksack* on his back did not hide the breadth of the shoulders nor the depth of the chest. The knees, left bare by the green leather breeches of the Tyrolese peasant, were clean cut and straight and the muscles bulged under the heavy woolen stocking. He wore the costume of the country in which he was, but Thomas Randolph was no peasant. One glance at the lean brown face under the soft green hat settled that question.

"Katrina," he called, "Katrina, do you suppose I could have a bottle of beer?"

"The signore may have whatever he chooses," came a cheerful answer from within and the man settled into a chair with a long-drawn sigh of content.

Reluctantly Lady Berwick's eyes left the picture before them to confront her indignant companion. "Really, Mrs. Watson," she murmured, "you surprise me. What is it that has so disturbed you?"

Mrs. Watson did not deign to reply. As her wrathful gaze was still fastened on the young man, Lady Berwick neglected her *Times* to gaze also upon the oblivious Randolph. In due time Katrina appeared with the bottle of beer, set it down on the table with a hearty "*Ecco, signore,*" and departed to resume her manifold duties. The two men who had lounged after her from the hotel remained.

Randolph poured out a glass, drained it and proceeded to fill his pipe. "Fine day, Sir John," he remarked. "Done anything with it?"

"Yes, enjoyed it." The tall gray-mustached Englishman flipped his cigarette away. "What's the matter with your leg, Randolph?"

The man glanced carelessly down at his bare knee. In the white flesh was the red, jagged line of a fresh cut. "A bath will fix it," he answered. "Miss Lynmouth and I took the upper trail from the Pfalzgau Hütte. I slipped on a nasty bit of rock."

Sir John Berwick grunted. "It's a poor place for slipping, if I remember right. Next time you'll break your neck."

The shrill scraping of Mrs. Watson's chair rasped through the still afternoon as that worthy pushed it back and rose from the tea-table. "I shall endure this no longer," she announced to the indifferent

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landscape, and with head held high she marched toward the door. Opposite the returned mountaineer and his beer, she stopped.

"Mr. Randolph," she said icily.

Randolph rose with such alacrity as his stiff muscles permitted and stood expectantly upon his sound leg.

"Mr. Randolph, I have no desire to continue your acquaintance. I consider it undesirable. I trust you will not intrude again."

The eyes of three dumbfounded men followed the fat form as it waddled into the seclusion of the Hotel Ampezzo. Randolph's lean face flushed under its coat of tan, but it was with surprise more than anger and he said nothing. It was Sir John who broke the amazed silence with a low chuckle:

"I say, Randolph, what is it you say in the States? The drinks are on you, what?"

The American turned a bewildered countenance to the elder man. "What the deuce does the old lady mean?" he began, but he was interrupted by the third member of the party:

"What she says, I suppose," he said with an obvious sneer. "It seemed quite plain to me. Ah——" he stepped quickly away to meet a young girl who was toiling up the steep road from the village. The two men looked after the straight slender figure in correct knickerbockers, plaid stockings and well polished shoes. In the daytime the Honorable Alexander Basset was invariably dressed for walking as befitted a guest in a Tyrolean hotel, but no one had ever encountered him farther in the fastnesses of the mountains than the white Reichstrasse which stretched along the level floor of the valley.

"That," said Sir John Berwick with languid decision, "is a beastly bounder, if he *is* the son of a peer."

"Is that what 'honorable' means?" asked Randolph quietly, though there was a new flash in the gray eyes that watched the sharp descent of the hotel road. In reply Sir John tugged at his drooping mustache.

"What the devil else would it mean tied on to Alexander Basset?" he remarked, and marched off to his wife's tea-table, and Thomas Randolph was left alone to await the coming of the Honorable Alexander Basset and Miss Dorothy Watson.

Apparently the young lady and her mother were not in absolute harmony on all points, for she halted opposite him in unaffected interest. "Why, Mr. Randolph," she cried, "you've hurt your leg terribly!"

For the first time that afternoon Randolph showed embarrassment.

"A scratch," he mumbled. "Nothing at all, you know. I was too lazy to change the minute I came in."

"But it must have hurt awfully."

"Dorothy! Dorothy!" The strident voice from within drowned the last faint echoes from the campanile and rolled like a clap of thunder out of tune forth upon the sleeping, sun-lit terrace. "I wish to speak to you at once!"

With a faint shade of impatience on her face, the girl turned obediently and left the tall figure in Tyrolean green standing erect by the door. As Lady Berwick had done a minute or two before, Randolph swept the valley at his feet, seeking in its calm loveliness some explanation. There was none. With a barely perceptible shrug he faced about. A few feet away the Honorable Alexander Basset was regarding him with a disagreeable smile. For a moment the eyes of the two men met; then with another shrug Randolph walked into the hotel.

Two hours later he emerged from his room, outwardly a different man. The hotel too was transformed. The long corridor was alive with men and women; the broad doorway was choked with them; out on the terrace where Mrs. Watson and Lady Berwick had drunk their tea in sunshine and solitude, more men and women were strolling. As Randolph came down the corridor the gong sounded and the whole mass began to flow through the opened doors of the dining-room.

Somewhat to his surprise Randolph found Lady Berwick and Sir John seated next to him in the places left vacant that morning by the departure of a stolid German and his *Frau*. The murmured expression of his pleasure at the substitution was not well received.

"We had the best table in the place, over there by the window," growled Sir John, "and now they've turned us out—evicted us by Jove—for the sake of a lot of beastly blue-coated monkeys. Look at that!"

Two Austrian officers, slim-waisted, tight trousered, were moving stiffly toward the Englishman's lost table, their sabers jangling at their heels, their light blue coats blazing with gold lace and epaulets.

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"As a military man yourself," remarked Randolph, "you ought to be glad to see so much respect paid the profession."

"Then why don't they respect us, I should like to know?" interjected Lady Berwick from the other side of her husband. "I remonstrated myself with Mme. Carini. All she said was 'They are of the General's staff. They must have the best. They are of the staff.' The woman's a parrot."

"Where's the General?" asked Randolph.

"Oh, he's coming," said Sir John. "He and half an army corps. Then we'll eat in the kitchen, I suppose. They're having some silly maneuvres, you know, invading Italy or defending Austria or something. Anyhow the country between here and Botzen swarms with troops, I'm told, and these fellows are the advance guard." By the end of the meal Sir John was sufficiently in good humor to carry Randolph off with him to the billiard-room to grumble there in great content over the abominations of the solitary table.

Permitted at length to lay down his cue, Randolph strolled out to find that the hotel had undergone another transformation. The dining-room had been swept bare of tables, at one end three or four representatives of village musical genius were fiddling industriously, encouraged by a liberal supply of sour red wine, and the floor was crowded with English, Germans and Americans dancing into one another and the few natives bold enough to avail themselves of Mme. Carini's weekly invitation to enjoy themselves—and incidentally entertain her guests with an exhibition of "local color."

In the doorway stood Katrina, a yellow ribbon in her hair, a yellow kerchief around her neck, her robust figure one mass of holiday starch and embroidery. "The signore comes late to the dance," she said, shaking her finger at him in the gesture reserved strictly for the most favored of the Ampezzo's many guests.

"On the contrary, I appear to be just in time," retorted Randolph. A second later they were out on the floor, dancing some strange unconscious compromise between an American waltz and a Tyrolese measure.

Three times they went around the room; then, as the music stopped abruptly, there came to Randolph's ears in the sudden silence, an acid voice:

"I do not wish to discuss the question, Sir John. To dance with a servant! It can have but one meaning and I consider it a disgusting exhibition of brazen effrontery."

"The devil take that lunatic!" Randolph dropped Katrina's arm and faced about to behold gloomy decorum in the person of Mrs. Watson, seated near the door. Above her chair towered the tall figure of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Berwick. His eyes met the American's for a minute with a curious twinkle.

"Really, Mrs. Watson," he drawled in a very audible voice, "by now, from what you tell me, your daughter should be quite hardened to these outrageous insults."

"Sir John!" Mrs. Watson bounced in her chair like an agitated rubber ball. "I insist upon knowing what you mean!" she demanded with ponderous dignity.

"You find so many for her, don't you know. Isn't there just a chance she might be getting fed up on them? By-the-way, is this your first time away from the States?"

The ghost of a flush rose in Mrs. Watson's withered cheek, but she stood her ground.

"Fed up? I utterly fail to follow you, Sir John."

"I haven't traveled far," returned the Englishman wearily. "What I meant was that this particular outrage is thirty years old. Ever since there was a Hotel Ampezzo the young men have danced with the—er—attendants. It's one of the customs of the place—just like the House of Lords or a cocktail, you know."

Once Mrs. Watson opened her mouth to speak, only to think better of it the same moment. After all he was Sir John and his wife was Lady Berwick. But some vague rumor of the wickedness of London's smart society penetrated the good woman's head and she shivered. Nevertheless she kept silent. An unexpected ally rescued her.

"Sir John likes his joke, Mrs. Watson," said the voice of the Honorable Alexander Basset, "but I for one entirely agree with you. It must be more than annoying for you to feel that your daughter is exposed to such spectacles. Certainly it would not be tolerated in England."

With a long drawn breath of relief, Mrs. Watson rose to her feet. The son of a peer was upon her side and no mere baronet could hope to stem the tide of indignant virtue.

"Thank you, Mr. Basset. Every *lady* must thank you. I shall stay here no longer to have scandal flaunted in my face."

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One stately step toward the door brought her face to face with Randolph, Katrina still by his side. Under its coat of tan, a dull red throbbed through the man's lean face. Every muscle was set, and, still pulling his mustache, Sir John Berwick's calm eyes saw the distended nostrils quiver. "Humph," he muttered and waited.

Unable to pass him without a humiliating detour, Mrs. Watson's protesting progress came to a reluctant halt before the young man who stood immovable between her and the only exit.

Mrs. Watson waved a majestic hand.

"Let me pass, if you please," she said.

An instant longer the eyes of the American blazed down upon her before his arm went about Katrina's waist and he turned to the girl.

"My dance, I believe," he said aloud. They whirled away and the starched white skirt of the servant brushed against the black silk of the enraged woman as she rustled from the room.

The evening was well advanced when Randolph stepped out upon the terrace. Twice before that night he had been there but on neither occasion had he found what he sought. Now the moon showed him nothing but the graveled walk, the formal little garden, and below, the village, guarded in its early sleep by the ghostly ramparts of the rock mountains. For a moment he peered closely at the few figures strolling up and down in front of him; then with sudden determination left the terrace to strike up a path through the larches at the side of the hotel.

A few steps brought him to a sharp turn, around which the path ended abruptly on the edge of a steep grassy bank. Seated on a bench, her back turned to him, was a girl.

"I hoped I might find you here," said Randolph as he reached her side.

Dorothy Watson turned her head slowly and without any affectation of surprise.

"Did you? Why?" she asked.

"It is where you belong," answered Randolph. "It is the loveliest spot in the place."

Dorothy's eyes went back to the view before her. Along the floor of the valley, the white line of the Reichstrasse stretched through green fields to the Austrian customhouse and then vanished in the dark mass of woods at the foot of distant, grim precipices. In front of her rose the solitary peak of Antelao, and the moon that lighted the girl's young face rode just above the fresh snow on its summit.

"I have been looking for you all the evening," said the man, and with his eyes still fastened on her he seated himself by her side on the bench. "I did not see you at our grand ball," he went on with a little laugh, for she had answered nothing.

Dorothy leaned forward, as though drawn toward the silent mountains. The slight movement increased almost imperceptibly the distance between them and a sharp crease appeared between the man's brows. "You would have enjoyed it," he asserted, but some unspoken thought brought a tremor into the quiet voice.

"I do not think so," said the young girl. The deliberate coldness of the answer fell on quick ears. Randolph leaned abruptly forward, his face close to hers.

"Something is wrong," said he. "It may be none of my business, but can't you tell me what it is?"

There was no possibility of misunderstanding the movement with which the girl drew back from him.

"As you said, Mr. Randolph," she replied, "it is not your business."

"What nonsense is this?" Randolph sprang to his feet to face her angrily. "Anything that concerns you is my business. You know it. I make it mine. No, you can't stop me!"—The girl had turned on him, command flashing in her eyes.—"I'm in earnest now. There's something behind all this. Your mother's silly——"

"I do not care to discuss my mother, Mr. Randolph."

Dorothy's clear voice did stop him; his last words were lost in a quick taking of his breath that was almost a sob. She too had risen to her feet, holding herself proudly erect before him, her slender white-clad figure revealed in the moonlight like the living heart of the woods and rocks in which she stood. Something of the sort Randolph had tried to tell her only the night before in that very spot. He had not succeeded well—at best he had always been convinced that he was but a stammering idiot when he was with her. Now all that he could think of was her indignation and the harsh words on his tongue that justified it.

When she turned away from him he sprang between her and the path.

"Forgive me, Dorothy. I am not going to

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discuss your mother. Yet I know that for some reason she dislikes me. Until to-night I had hoped that you thought differently."

"I do not know on what grounds." Forced to halt as Mrs. Watson had been earlier in the evening, Dorothy met the man's eyes steadily. "Certainly you were mistaken. I quite agree with my mother."

Randolph stepped aside with a mechanical bow; the blow was numbing in its force. Her eyes fastened on the path ahead, the girl had already passed him on her way to the hotel when some impulse made her turn to complete the wreck she had caused.

"My mother informs me, Mr. Randolph," she said distinctly, "that in view of your conduct, she considers your acquaintance undesirable. I must ask you therefore to regard it as ended."

She walked on down the path to the terrace and Randolph was left alone in the shadow of the larches. The absurdity of the parrot-like repetition of the mother's words did not occur to him. For the past week he had merely smiled at the elder woman's pompous disapproval and its manifold and ludicrous expressions. That she was Dorothy's mother was a mystery he left to scientists learned in the laws of heredity to explain if they could. To him Dorothy was herself; Mrs. Watson's wild follies could have nothing to do with her.

When at last he turned back to the hotel only a few lights showed in the long expanse of windows. He could not guess that, in the darkness of a room he passed upon the ground floor, Dorothy Watson lay on the bed listening for his step on the gravelled walk and waiting for the tears that did not come.

CHAPTER II

THE FATE OF SPIES

FORTUNATELY for Miss Watson the colony at the Hotel Ampezzo had a more entertaining spectacle the next morning than the dark rings under her eyes and the pallor of her face. She came late to the breakfast awaiting her on the terrace to find men and women staring through every conceivable form of telescope and field-glass at the roads and lanes that led up from the village to a gap in the rock barrier and then vanished behind it. Ordinarily they lay white and glaring between their green borders; now they were darkened with moving little dots. An incessant volley of exclamations spared her the trouble of asking what it all meant.

"There are guns there, I tell you." "Hello, there's the cavalry!" "By Jove, there's a lot of them. It must be a whole army corps." "If they've come down from Falzareggo they must have started deuced early to get here by now," and so on indefinitely.

The din of it all jarred upon her. Dorothy wanted to be alone. She cared nothing if the entire Austrian army chose to parade through the valley.

She cared still less when Sir John Berwick appeared in front of her with one of the staff officers in tow. Some time in the course of the previous evening he had swallowed his indignation at his eviction and made the acquaintance of the intruder. Finding it pleasant, he had decided in the kindness of his heart to amuse the American girl by introducing to her the Herr Captain Count von Glockner.

The Herr Captain clicked his spurred heels together and made her a stiff bow. In his blue coat and black trousers, with a row of medals strung across his breast and his mustaches turned fiercely up in the Prussian mode, Count von Glockner was not in himself an unattractive addition to a breakfast of coffee and rolls. Moreover he was undoubtedly a real captain and quite probably a real count. Dorothy had heard more than once that the officers of the smart Austrian regiments were by far the most aristocratic set of men left in modern democratic Europe. Altogether there was no possible reason why she should not have considered him most interesting.

Nevertheless she did not. She replied in mechanical monosyllables to the formal ponderous English in which he addressed her. The strain was obviously telling upon Von Glockner's limited supply of English phrases when the advent of the Honorable Alexander Basset and the consequent introductions set the wheels of conversation going once more. Dorothy had abandoned even the pretense of attention when Sir John's slow voice forced her to look up.

"Where do you suppose our friend Randolph is this morning? I've been hunting him all over the place."

"Really? I had not thought about it." The statement was quite unnecessary but

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Dorothy Watson was still young—in years and in the world.

The maid who had been clearing the table straightened up with the coffee-pot and the little pot of honey in her hand: "Mr. Randolph, he went early on the road to Falzareggo. He had his lunch and that—what you call it in English?—that machine with which he takes so many pictures."

"Oh, his camera, eh?" said Sir John. "Randolph's deuced keen on his photographs. When I was his age I wasn't thinking of my camera, I can tell you, Miss Watson. By George, we'd have laughed a fellow out of the mess in India if he'd gone rushing about the mountains taking pictures. He's a good sort, though. I suppose he wanted to catch Von Glockner's fellows on the march."

"I beg pardon—you were saying?" The Count wheeled sharply about, leaving the Honorable Alexander in the midst of an unfinished sentence. "Who is it that with his camera has gone?"

For the first time Dorothy regarded him with unfeigned interest. Something in the suddenness of the question caught her ear—something which had nothing in common with the punctilious commonplaces of his previous conversation. It caught Sir John's ear also, for he stared at the officer with his mild blue eyes for a second before he replied rather curtly: "A friend of mine. Randolph is his name."

"With his camera—there?" Von Glockner waved his hand toward the dark column still pouring over the crest of the pass above the rock-bound valley. "He has gone there—with his camera?" he asked again.

"How the deuce do I know where he has gone?" snapped the Englishman testily. "I'm not his keeper. Why shouldn't he go there?"

In stead of replying, the Captain turned to the maid with a sharp peremptory question in German. The woman replied with the obsequiousness demanded by the uniform he wore. Von Glockner spoke again, and again the woman answered, the Captain twisting his mustaches still higher about his nose as he listened.

Von Glockner dismissed the woman with a nod and turned back to them. "German you do not know?" He glanced interrogatively from one to the other before he went on with a barely perceptible accent of relief. "In English I am difficult which compelled me to speak in the other. Miss Watson, I am delighted to have the honor of your knowledge. When I have the greater leisure, you will permit me to improve it—yes? Until then I remove myself." And with this doubtful compliment he did remove himself into the hotel from which he had emerged.

"You understand the beastly lingo, Basset," said Sir John as the blue coat disappeared. "What's all the row?"

Basset shrugged his shoulders. "Upon my word, Berwick, I don't listen to every servant-girl's gossip—nor dance with them either," he added with a languid smile directed toward Miss Watson. Dorothy pushed back her chair and went to her room.

All the morning the black dots crawled over the roads down into the village of Ampezzo, but Dorothy still sat with her arm upon the window-sill, looking out across the valleys to where the Falzareggo road climbed above the last green pasture and was gone.

It was very different from the rolling wheat-fields of home—too different. For the first time that Summer the girl wished she were back. There she understood. All the way to New York, all the way across the Atlantic, wherever they had been, Mrs. Watson had impressed upon her the fact that they had gone into the great world. As Dorothy knew nothing of the great world it was obvious that she must trust implicitly to her mother's judgment. It seemed quite plain and logical; lest there should be any mistake, however, Mrs. Watson repeated it many times. Hitherto the girl had acquiesced readily enough. That morning it occurred to her that her mother's judgment found its chief exercise in condemning her own inclinations.

As the undutiful thought forced itself upon her, the door opened to admit Mrs. Watson in person. Her first words were singularly well-adapted to strengthen the impression.

"Good gracious, child, what are you moping here for?" The question and the high-pitched querulous tone of it seemed an impertinent intrusion upon the girl's right to privacy. "Everybody's been asking where you were and the troops——"

"Oh, mother, what on earth do you care about the troops? You know you don't know the general from the drum-major."

Mrs. Watson gasped as the girl turned

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wearily from the window to confront her. The fact that it was quite true did not in the least mitigate the heinousness of the heresy. In a military country looking at troops was a plain duty. What else were they there for? Mrs. Watson sat down on the nearest chair and recovered her breath.

"I brought you abroad," she began, "in order to secure for you the benefits of foreign travel—in itself a liberal education. I have always regretted that I did not have this opportunity in my youth myself. If you are going to make no better use of the opportunity than this, I think we might better have stayed at home."

"I think we might," said the girl.

Mrs. Watson sat bolt upright; it was not at all the answer she had anticipated. "What is the matter with you, Dorothy? Can it be that your unfortunate acquaintance with that outrageous individual has upset you to this extent?"

"What outrageous individual?" demanded Dorothy quite unmoved.

The dead calmness of her manner irritated the already flustered woman intensely. Never endowed with keen perceptions, it did not occur to her that her daughter might actually be suffering. "I don't understand you at all," she cried. "Whom do you suppose I mean? And it isn't Randolph after all?"

"Then why should I suppose that you mean him?"

Mrs. Watson rose heavily to her feet in righteous indignation: "You are quite impossible this morning, Dorothy. Did I not point out to you last night that his appearance in such an indecent costume was an insult to every lady in the hotel, that his insolent flaunting of his—er—intimacy with a servant was a scandal that I would not endure? I told you all this last night."

"Of course you did, mother. And now you say it isn't Mr. Randolph at whom I am supposed to be angry." Dorothy turned back to her study of the white strip of road upon the western horizon.

"I said nothing of the kind. *Mister* Randolph indeed! The man is here hiding under a false name!" And having at last delivered her thunderbolt, Mrs. Watson stood awaiting its effect. In quantity, at least if not in quality, it was satisfactory. Dorothy's apathy dropped from her and she sprang to her feet.

"I don't believe it! How do you know?"

"Dorothy!" It was Mrs. Watson's heart and not her social conscience which was angry now. "Am I in the habit of telling falsehoods?"

Her daughter waved the question aside. "I want to know who told you that."

"I do not see what possible difference it makes," answered her mother in cold wrath. "If you insist upon knowing, however, it was Mr. Basset. He was kind enough to explain that he felt it his duty to warn me that this person who has been masquerading as Randolph is really named Ashburn."

"How did he know?" demanded her inquisitor.

"I did not ask him. There are subjects which are not discussed in society. Fortunately there will be no further need for us to think of the matter. The man will be arrested to-night."

"What for? Because he's named Ashburn?"

Dorothy's indecorous and unreasoning insistence upon details drove the elder woman to the door. There she turned to deliver her parting shot:

"I do not know what for. It is enough for me that Count von Glockner has taken measures to free the hotel from his obnoxious presence. Mme. Carini should have done it long ago. By luncheon I trust you will be more yourself." Therewith the door closed upon her mother and Dorothy was free to watch the Falzareggo road again.

She saw it with different eyes now. Those black lines which wound like the end of a whip through the rising dust had but one meaning to her. They were coming to arrest him. The mailed fist of the Austrian Empire was already over the man; that night it would close upon him.

While she looked, the last of the column rose against the sky, passed down toward Ampezzo, and the white dust trailed slowly away through the still August morning. There where the green of the last field touched the blue sky between the rocks of Tofana and the woods of the Belvedere he had gone that morning; and there in a few hours he would return, swinging down into the hands of Von Glockner. And at that moment her eye fell on the trim figure of the Austrian officer coming slowly up the steep road from the village. He had been taking his measures.

Dorothy rose from the window, walking noiselessly to the door. Adventurer or not,

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Randolph or Ashburn, or whatever his name was, must be warned.

In the office down the corridor, Katrina was busy over her accounts. Dorothy paused irresolute. She did not want to speak to her; but the girl was very intelligent and she would know what to do—which was exactly what Dorothy did not. While she hesitated, Katrina looked up, saw her, nodded curtly and resumed her work. With good reason Katrina detested Mrs. Watson and she was not above visiting her disfavor upon the second generation.

It was enough for Dorothy. After that the American girl could not humble herself to seek advice from her. She stole on down the corridor and ran into the waitress who had served her at breakfast.

"Maria, what did the Count say to you this morning?" The words came of themselves and the servant stared in surprise.

"To me, signorina? The Count?"

"Yes, Von Glockner. He spoke to you."

"Oh, it was about Mr. Randolph. He asks who he is, how long he has been here and whether he takes much pictures. It is all that—what you call him?—camera. They are very strict, these soldiers—no pictures, no maps, nothing. It is the border, signorina, there Italy,"—she waved her hand to the south—"here Austria."

"But Mr. Randolph, he——" Dorothy stammered.

Maria shrugged her stalwart shoulders. "Mr. Randolph, he get in trouble if he don't take care," and, the housekeeper's shrill voice resounding from the pantry, she hurried away.

Dimly Dorothy felt that she understood. The many times she had seen Randolph climb up the hill, his camera at his side, after a long day in the mountains, flashed upon her memory. The endless drawings that he studied by himself and never sought to interest others in, the mountaineer's costume which he wore in defiance of all her mother's prejudices in favor of complete clothing, the assumed name he bore, even his friendship with the natives which had proved the last straw on Mrs. Watson's load of indignation—all pointed to the same conclusion. Randolph was a spy, Von Glockner knew it, and that evening he would walk into the Austrian net.

Back in her own room, Dorothy slipped on a short walking-skirt and heavy, nailed boots. Then, with her heart beating fast, she stepped out on the terrace. The Berwicks were there, Sir John absorbed in his favorite occupation of reading the *Times*, his wife placidly sewing. She looked up with a smile as the young girl's shadow fell in front of her.

"You're not going walking at this time of day, Miss Watson?" she said. "Why, it will be luncheon in twenty minutes!"

"An errand in the village," murmured Dorothy. "I think I'll have luncheon there anyway," she added hastily, thinking of her mother's vociferous anxiety when she did not appear at the table. A few steps farther on she turned, unable to restrain the question trembling on her lips:

"Sir John, what do they do to spies?"

"Eh, what's that?" The baronet peered hastily over the edge of his paper. "Spies? Shoot them, of course."

"Shoot them!" The spike of Dorothy's walking-stick bit deep into the gravel as she leaned upon it for support.

"Rather. We shot a fellow in India once, I remember. Jolly well broke me up—the regiment on parade, the band playing the death march, the coffin all handy—made a fellow's skin creep. I forget what he'd been doing—selling pictures up Khaibar way to the Russians or something like that."

"My gracious, child, how white you are?" Lady Berwick dropped her sewing in consternation on the ground. "You ought not to be out in the sun at all!"

"It's all right," stammered Dorothy. "I didn't sleep well last night. I've got to be going now. I'm late."

She fairly ran down the road and Sir John Berwick rose to his feet to follow her with his eyes.

"Late!" he muttered. "There's nothing to be late about down there." He picked up his paper and sat down. "I say, Muriel, what's she so keen on spies for? I rather fancied she was thinking more of Randolph."

Lady Berwick brushed the dirt from her sewing and rammed it into the bag. "You're wonderfully acute, John. If you don't look sharp you will be late for luncheon."

CHAPTER III

A WARNING

BY A FOOTBRIDGE crossing the stream at the bottom of the valley Dorothy reached a narrow path which mounted up through the fields to join the high-

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road at the rockbound gap. There was no shade. Under the noon sun the heat, heavy with the scent of the grass, rose in waves and stifled her as she toiled on. Before she had reached the bridge she was panting from her rush down the hill; by the time she had dragged herself to a level with the first of the white-plastered farmsteads, half house and half barn, which nestled against the rising slope, her breath came in gasps and her legs ached with a numb lifeless pain. And the white gleam of the dust upon the Falzareggo road was still far above her.

The path ran close to the farmhouse. Under the projecting wooden gallery with its store of firewood was a bench sheltered from the pitiless sun. There Dorothy seated herself to struggle with the wild panic that had driven her thus far. Slowly her strength returned and with it a calmer, firmer determination. They would not catch Randolph. In imagination she saw Von Glockner striding up and down the terrace, his saber and spurs jingling on the gravel, waiting for his prey. He would go hungry for it. More quietly now, the girl rose and set herself to breast the green barrier.

She was on the highroad to Falzareggo—the road along which Maria said Randolph had gone—running onward under the rocks to the little inn and hamlet of Pocol. If he had gone that way Dorothy knew enough of the country to understand that he would be hard put to it to avoid returning by the same route.

At the inn a woman brought coffee and coarse bread to a table by the side of the road. A few paces beyond, diverging paths, sign-posts and guiding splashes of paint on rocks and trees pointed the way to various points of vantage along the faces, on the summits and in the hearts of the surrounding mountains. Any one of these Randolph might have taken, and there was no possibility of learning which; but there, at the table in front of the little inn, Dorothy held the key to all.

She drank her coffee and munched the bread in the content of confidence. When he appeared, she would tell him of his danger and he would go westward to Botzen and the railroad or southward over the border to Italy. And she, she would go back to the Hotel Ampezzo and forget. It was all very simple, only—Dorothy glanced about her a little nervously. Already the shadows were beginning to lengthen on the broken pastures about her. If he did not come soon she might be late for dinner and explanations would be awkward.

The girl smiled bitterly to herself. She had come to save a man from imprisonment, possibly—the thought made her shudder—from death, and now she was worrying over the necessity of accounting for a ruined dinner. It was all so petty; her whole life was so petty. The thoughts of the morning swept over her with renewed force. What did all her mother's talk of travel and the world amount to? She had been happy at home; why had she not been permitted to remain there? Mrs. Watson said it was narrowing; were they any less narrow here? She stared across the rock-strewn stretch of grass to the solitude of Tofana towering above her, and the silent mountain mocked her insignificance.

An automobile horn broke the silence of the hamlet. A minute later a car shot into sight and stopped before her. The two men in the tonneau stepped out, stared for a second with the frankness of the German traveler at the solitary girl at her table, and entered the inn, where Dorothy heard them talking loudly to the waitress. "Hotel Ampezzo" came to her ears, surrounded by unintelligible words and she guessed that they were to be fellow guests with her. For a second she thought idly of them—a gray-bearded, square-set man wrapped more in the consciousness of his own prosperity than in the light motor duster he wore, and an alert individual whose attentive manner was that of a private secretary.

Then she thought no more of them. He was coming. A hundred yards or so beyond her, where a footpath joined the highroad, she saw him, the empty *rucksack*, which had held his lunch, upon his back and the camera swinging from his side.

He was looking away from her as he walked—looking at the summit of Tofana swimming in the gold and blue of the afternoon light—and she was by his elbow and had spoken before he noticed.

"Mr. Randolph."

The long stride stopped abruptly and he stood staring at her, the green Tyrolese hat with the curved cock's feather crumpled in his hand.

"Mr. Randolph," she said again.

"Yes, Miss Watson?" The man's voice and face were quite quiet, but his figure visibly jerked itself into attention as he

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bowed. Save for that tightening of the muscles, it might have been the drawing-room of the Ampezzo in which they met. His calmness balked Dorothy. She had come to save a malefactor from the consequences of his offenses and she encountered the self-possessed gentleman whom she had rebuffed the night before. A sudden flush of anger seized the harassed, anxious spirit of the girl and she strode toward the inn she had just left. For a step or two, Randolph kept pace with her; then he leaned forward.

"You were saying?" he asked.

Dorothy stopped short in the road and faced him.

"I came here to meet you, Mr. Randolph," she blurted out.

"What!" As the ejaculation burst from his lips, the man's eyes blazed and his lean face grew leaner as the skin tightened over set muscles. In a second he had recovered himself, though the light still flamed down upon her. "That was very good of you. It really is a glorious afternoon for a walk."

"I didn't come for a walk." The girl was ready to cry with humbled pride and vexation. She had barely been able to drag herself to Pocol and he talked of a pleasure stroll! Furious with him, with the world, with herself, she faced Von Glockner's victim.

"The Austrians are here," she said and stared defiantly into the burning eyes fastened on her, waiting for the look of fear to dawn in them. But there was no hint of fear about the barcheaded man standing in the road, only a slight bewilderment, as of one who struggled to understand and did not dare to believe he did.

"So I heard," he replied. "Did you come all the way here to see them pass? It was not quite safe—stragglers, you know, and all that sort of thing."

Dorothy's little hob-nailed boot beat impatiently upon the road. "*I* have no reason to fear them," she retorted with vicious emphasis. "It is you they are looking for, Mr.—Ashburn."

At the name the man's tall figure straightened and his black brows met over his nose.

"So you know," he said slowly, more to himself than to her.

"Yes, I know." She continued to look him full in the face, but the man's eyes did not meet hers. Instead they strayed to the big red touring-car by the door of the inn and rested on the figure of the chauffeur. The brows were still gathered over the straight thin nose, but a hard little smile curled his lips.

"So you know," he repeated at length. "And you came to meet me—why?"

Miss Watson flushed angrily; this was poor gratitude.

"Because I do not like to see any man suffer, Mr. Ashburn—not even a spy. I came to warn you. If you go back to the hotel you will be arrested."

To Dorothy's amazement the man in front of her whistled shrilly. "Who told you that?" he demanded with still puckered lips. A thrill of admiration, more unreasoning even than her anger, swept over the girl. The shadow of mysterious crime hung over him but at least he faced it all with the courage of a man. That was something; despite herself, the girl's tone softened:

"You mustn't go back, Mr. Ashburn. The soldiers have found out and they are waiting for you. You're strong—if you start now you can be in Italy before they learn what's happened. Then you will be safe and——" her voice faltered a little—"and you can make something better of yourself than this. But go! Don't look at me like that—you haven't any time to waste. Go! Go!"

The panic that had held her all day rose uncontrolled in her face and words. Ashburn stared at her for a second, then suddenly whipped about with his back to the road up which she had toiled.

"By Jove, I must go," she heard him mutter. He jammed his hat low on his head and held out his hand. "Good-by. You've been kinder than you know. I'll thank you for it some day. Good-by."

The bare knees flashed in the sunlight as he strode away and then the dark woods, creeping up from the ravine behind the inn, swallowed him and he was gone. A feeling of disappointment and weariness, a sense of the gray monotony of life, stole over Dorothy, staring at the last glimpse of the path as it wound through the trees. Her brief melodrama was over. She had played her part and now she must go back. Somehow it had all become very flat.

"Fräulein! Fräulein!"

What on earth was all that hideous uproar in her ear? Resentful of the intrusion upon her solitude, Dorothy turned to begin the dreary homeward descent.

"Fräulein! Fräulein!"

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Again came the discordant call and she glanced about inquiringly. The gray-bearded German was standing up in the back of his car, beckoning to her. At any other time Dorothy would have passed on as outwardly unconscious of the man's insolence as of the dirt she walked on; now it was only the unexpected that seemed normal to her and she stopped.

With his hat in his hand the man leaned respectfully over the side of the tonneau: "*Ich bitte*—your pardon—please." The guttural mixture of German and English was at least deferential in accent and the speaker obviously a gentleman. Assured that she had no common rudeness to fear, the girl surveyed the strange figure in quiet surprise.

"What is it?" she said.

"Der Herr mit whom you speak, I ask, who is it?"

Under the broad brim of her hat, the girl's white brow wrinkled. It was a long way to the Italian line and Ashburn would need every minute.

"An acquaintance of mine," she answered stiffly.

"Surely, dot can ve all see. But what is it, his name?"

"You must ask him," said Dorothy with a grimness strange on her young lips, and turning her back upon the man she set out upon the long way before her.

CHAPTER IV

A BOUNDER AND A ROBBERY

THROUGH the long shadows of the August afternoon Dorothy hurried on. Her mission was achieved, but no elation came with the thought. He had turned his back and run—it was precisely what she had expected and wished him to do, but she did not like men who ran away.

"He is bad and I am glad he is gone," Dorothy said aloud; and then, raising her eyes for an instant from the foot-path winding through the fields, she saw across the valley the long façade of the Hotel Ampezzo. She stopped abruptly to stare at it with eyes wide with sudden hatred. It would be worse than empty now. He was gone, but the others were there—Sir John and Lady Berwick with their well-meant kindnesses, Basset and her mother, Von Glockner with his stiff speech and the menacing jingle of his saber—they were all there and she must face them. If only they would leave her in peace, for she was very, very tired!

The dusk had already settled upon the terrace when Dorothy, toiling over the last steep rise, came to it and slipped unnoticed into her room. Though she dressed as hastily as she could, it was ten minutes after the final summons to dinner when she stepped out into the hallway to find Mrs. Watson beating an impatient tattoo upon the arm of her chair.

"I don't see, Dorothy," said her mother, marching severely ahead of her toward the dining-room door, "why it is impossible for you ever to be punctual. You can not have so much more to do than every one else here. Where have you been all the afternoon?"

"I took a walk," began Dorothy, and then said no more. Holding the door for them to pass through was the master of the touring-car she had encountered at Pocol, and behind his spectacles his eyes were fastened upon her with the same intrusive stare.

Throughout the length of the dinner she felt that stare upon her. Once she tried furtively to locate the man, but her eyes lighted instead upon Von Glockner at his table by the window, and she fancied that he, too, was studying her curiously.

She was afraid of Count von Glockner. The German of the automobile was merely an annoying civilian whose interest in the fugitive she did not even attempt to account for; the blue-coated Captain, smiling beneath his fiercely upturned mustaches, was the personification of Austrian military power, and it was that she feared. Yet the officer was still sitting placidly at the table with his colleague when the Honorable Alexander Basset appeared with an invitation to take coffee with him on the terrace, an invitation from which Mrs. Watson's cordial acceptance left the girl no loophole of escape.

Under the stars, high above the sleeping valley, Dorothy breathed more easily. Southward massive peaks of rock rose to meet the moon; they were in Italy, she knew—surely he was there by now. And then her ear caught the clank of a steel scabbard and Von Glockner stood before her.

"A delightful evening, Mrs. Watson. It pains that I fear I must intrude but——"

"Oh, but you do not. Sit down. We are merely having a little coffee with Mr. Basset." As the worthy matron whisked her somewhat ample skirts away from the

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fourth seat at the table, she shot a sharp glance at the young Englishman. For once his accustomed alertness had deserted him and he seemed in nowise eager to embrace the opportunity of playing host to a Herr Captain Count. "Mr. Basset was kind enough to ask us to have coffee," Mrs. Watson repeated in a tone well calculated to recall the recalcitrant to a sense of his social obligations.

"Oh, yes, delighted. Katrina, another cup of coffee. You will join us of course, Count?"

Von Glockner held up his hand to check the girl as she moved away.

"Thank you. To-night, no."

Dorothy heard the simple words and wondered. It seemed to her only yesterday that Randolph had laughingly declared that a Viennese would sell his soul for coffee. To offer it was a marked courtesy; to decline it an insult akin to refusing whisky in the cowboy bar-room of fiction.

"Really——" began Basset, when the Count's guttural voice interrupted.

"Again I regret that I should intrude, but I wish that I should know where is the man of whom you have spoken, this Randolph or Ashburn."

In sudden anger Dorothy turned in time to catch a quick glance from Basset. Instantly the young man's eyes left hers. "Er—really, I do not know. Why should you ask me?" he said hastily. Von Glockner favored him with a calm stare. "And why not?" he demanded. "Was it not you who told me of him? Was it not you who discovered that he was not Randolph but Ashburn? You said that to-night he would return; where is he, then?"

"So it was *you!* You told! You coward!"

Dorothy was on her feet, her eyes blazing with scorn. She was not aware that she had risen, or even that she had spoken. Her over-taxed self-control had simply shattered into atoms like the bulb of an electric light, and the words that rushed to her lips she had uttered regardless of consequences, almost unconsciously.

"*Dorothy!*" As Mrs. Watson gasped in horror at her daughter's outburst an agitated arm sent coffee-pot and sugar-bowl crashing to the floor. With a jingle of steel spurs and scabbard, Von Glockner bent stiffly to pick them up. When he raised his head again, the girl had sought refuge in her own room and he was alone with the mother and the Honorable Alexander Basset.

For a second the two men regarded each other before their attention was called to Mrs. Watson, rising heavily to her feet.

"I do not understand it," she stammered. "I am very sorry—my daughter has not been well—you must excuse her. I think I will go to her now. I am really very sorry, Mr. Basset."

In her obvious distress the stout little figure had acquired a certain dignity, and neither of the men smiled as she turned her back upon them, rustling through the open doorway into the hotel. When the last ruffle of her black skirt had vanished from their view Basset shifted his feet uneasily.

"I think I'll have a smoke inside," he muttered, but the Austrian blocked his path. Twisting his mustache, he stood looking at the Englishman, and the Englishman was, perforce, compelled to look at him.

"Vell?" Von Glockner asked at length.

"Well what?" snapped Basset.

"That is what I say, well what?"

"I'll tell you what!" cried Basset. "You've got me into the devil of a mess, that's what! Can't you keep your infernal spy-catching out of a gentleman's party?"

"The party is gone," returned Von Glockner imperturbably, "and so I think is the spy already."

"That's your lookout," snarled the Honorable Alexander. "You didn't expect me to go out and collar him for you, did you?"

"I do not expect you to catch anything, Mr. Basset; certainly not by conversing to the world about it."

The young man started perceptibly. "How do you know I said anything?" he demanded.

The Austrian shrugged his blue-clad shoulders. "The young lady, she knows—much. Somebody has told her already and it was not I."

"By Jove!" Under the weight of a sudden idea, Basset forgot his anger. "By Jove, you don't think she warned him?"

"Vell," Von Glockner waved his hand about the terrace, "he is not here, is it not? And she said you——"

"I know what she said!" interrupted Basset savagely. "You needn't tell me that again. But look here—" in his excitement he stepped close to the Austrian, "—look here, if she told him not to come back here, she knows where he's gone. We can find out from her, I tell you. She'll be sorry she—*now* what's the matter?"

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Von Glockner had drawn himself up rigidly in front of the Honorable Alexander, his mustaches bristling more fiercely than ever.

"You have been in Vienna, you say, Mr. Basset?"

"Of course. What the deuce——"

"And there you have known officers of the Emperor?"

"Oh, I told you all that this afternoon. What——"

"Mr. Basset, I think you lie. The officers of the army of his Majesty do not hurt men through young girls. You are an insult, Mr. Basset!"

"Bully for you, old chap! I told Randolph yesterday that fellow was a beastly bounder." Sir John Berwick's head, cigar in mouth, rose like a grinning Jack-in-the-box above the little wooden fence which separated the graveled walk of the terrace from the café tables. "I was right, too," he repeated with satisfaction. "He *is* a bounder—perfectly beastly!"

"Who the devil asked you to listen?" roared Basset, turning to vent his wrath upon the mild-mannered gentleman. "What are you doing here?"

"Smoking," answered Sir John. "If you will row in public, you know, a fellow can't be deaf just to please you."

With some attempt at his accustomed superciliousness, the Honorable Alexander Basset turned away. "Confoundedly impertinent, I call it," he muttered; and then, as Captain Count von Glockner declined to make way for him, he walked around the table and found an open passage into the hotel.

"What's all the row?" asked Sir John, joining the Count. "I couldn't help hearing a bit of it, you know. I don't want to intrude, of course," he added hastily, "so you needn't tell me, if you don't want."

"It is nothing," returned Von Glockner calmly. "It is only that the Herr Basset is disgusting for a gentleman to have affairs with. He asks me to have coffee—*me!* Bah!" The Count brushed away an imaginary insect and turned to go. "You will excuse me. I have affairs of the disagreeable."

He, too, followed Dorothy and Basset into the hotel, leaving the Englishman to ponder over his cigar upon the extraordinary scene. Never distinguished for quick wit, his mind made so little of it that at the end of fifteen minutes he was still clinging to his two original articles of faith—that Dorothy Watson was a deuced nice girl who seemed a bit taken with Randolph and that Alexander Basset was a beastly bounder.

"I told him so, too," chuckled Berwick, as he returned with satisfaction to this indisputable truth. "I wish the fellow'd clear out, though. I hate to see him hanging about. Now, Katrina, what are you looking at?"

The girl, peering into the darkness that bordered the terrace, started at the sound of his voice.

"I do not know," she stammered. "Nothing. I was thinking."

"Thinking! I didn't know you had time to think."

Katrina turned savagely on him, stirred by the clumsy jest. "I work, but I can suffer too! I work for you to be idle, and so I can not think when I see a friend robbed!"

The amazed dropping of Sir John's jaw put a sudden end to his smile. "The deuce you say!" he muttered. "The whole place is mad."

"It is not! It is you, you pig-headed English, who are mad! I tell you he is being robbed!"

"Well, upon my word!" Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Berwick stood blinking at the girl as though he doubted his ears.

"Now, really, you mustn't take on about it so. Just sit down and tell me all about it, there's a good girl. Who's being robbed?"

"Mr. Randolph. They are in his rooms. They search and they take what they like."

"The deuce you say!" repeated Sir John in undisguised astonishment.

"It is the soldiers—Captain von Glockner and his men."

"*Whe-ew!*" Sir John whistled shrilly. "And she asked about spies this afternoon. So that's the row, is it? I say, Katrina——"

"Say, say! Who cares what you say? What will you *do?*"

"I can't do anything, my girl," answered Sir John in genuine compassion.

"Well, *I* can!" snapped Katrina.

She flounced angrily away from him, and Berwick turned to the silent valley. "A jolly rum place this is getting to be," he remarked aloud. "I wonder what Muriel knows about it?"

But Lady Berwick knew even less than her puzzled spouse. So unresponsive was

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she that at the end of his recital Sir John grew impatient.

"It's all such rot," he cried. "Randolph's a very decent fellow, as chaps go, and it's a beastly shame to have him chivied all about the place! Why the dickens don't you say something, Muriel?"

His wife stopped knitting to look up at him. "Why should I?" she asked, and indicated with the point of her needle the open door of the *salon*. Writing at a desk at the farther end was Captain Count von Glockner, an orderly standing at attention by his side. The presence of a private soldier, in dusty uniform and heavy hob-nailed boots, within the very citadel of the Hotel Ampezzo was like the proclamation of martial law.

The Austrian laid down his pen and the watchers in the hallway saw him hand a despatch-box and a letter to the orderly. The man saluted and withdrew, as Von Glockner sauntered out into the hall.

Half an hour later turmoil reigned in the Hotel Ampezzo. The guests, excited, alarmed and indignant, huddled in the drawing-rooms and corridors or glared wrathfully at the impassive soldiers who blocked every exit. Across the moon-steeped fields that fell downward to the village, dark figures scurried and circled and the peace of the Summer night had fled before the roar of commands and the tramp of marching feet.

For the orderly whom Von Glockner had despatched to the village had crawled back to his master, beaten and robbed. Half-way down the hill, where the road wound through shadow under the eaves of a farmhouse, two men had set upon him. He had fought them—the Herr Captain could see that for himself—and he had clung to the despatches the Herr Captain had given him. But he was one against two. They had knocked him down and taken them from him.

CHAPTER V

A NEW ARRIVAL

FOR many hours in the sleepless night Dorothy heard cries and the clatter of heavy boots outside her window, but the morning sun found the valley at peace once more.

The accustomed calm struck coldly into Dorothy's heart. They must have found him—that was the meaning of the quiet, that was the answer to the question which had hammered at her brain since the chambermaid first told her of the robbery of the orderly. But why had he come back? She had warned him and he had started on the trail which led to Italy and safety. Why had he come back?

Throwing open the blinds of her window, she leaned out to look toward the mountains that closed the valley beyond the Austrian custom-house. Where the path to the tennis-court joined the terrace, the sunlight, struggling through the trees, fell upon a patch of dusty blue and flashed back at her from a rifle-barrel. With a little gasp, Dorothy faced about. Another soldier mounted guard at the head of the carriage road to the village.

How many more there were she had no leisure to learn, for at that moment Captain Count von Glockner rounded the corner of the hotel and passed in front of her. The blood rushed to the girl's face at the sight. Without stopping to think, possessed utterly by the new hope his appearance had brought, she called out to him:

"Count von Glockner!"

The Austrian halted in surprise, then, seeing who it was, took a step nearer. Dorothy's first impression was confirmed by the closer view. The high collar was wilted, the boots were muddied, there were fresh stains on the trousers and below one knee the cloth was ripped. The smart young officer must have spent a busy night to have become suddenly so oblivious to his costume.

Dorothy saw and understood; yet she was not strong enough to close her lips upon the hope.

"Captain, did you catch him?"

"Catch whom, Miss Watson?" asked the Captain dryly, and Dorothy bit her lip.

"I meant them," she stammered hastily, "the ruffians who robbed your man last night."

Von Glockner's eyes narrowed a little as he looked at her and he spoke very slowly:

"No, we did not catch the—ruffians. Perhaps it was because we had no coward to tell, Miss Watson," and having delivered this thrust, the Captain considerately turned his back upon the girl and gazed into space. Quite abruptly, he turned back upon her:

"It is a serious offense to attack the uniform of his Majesty, the Emperor," he said,

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and the warning in his voice was plain. "If I had a friend who had done it, I should be glad to learn that he was from Austria already. Good-morning, Miss Watson."

A glimpse of how serious it might be, Dorothy had that afternoon. All the morning the guests had fluttered about the ground searching for sentries and greeting each fresh discovery with shrill outcries. No one disturbed them, but the memory of that first hour of the alarm when they had been rudely herded into the hotel and kept there at the point of the bayonet gave decided piquancy to the patrolling figures.

As the day grew old, however, interest in the affair visibly declined, for curiosity can not feed long on sustained ignorance. After her unfortunate encounter with Von Glockner, Dorothy preferred to risk no more questions. Sir John Berwick was the only one whom she would have cared to approach, and that individual kept sedulously to himself. Earlier in the day he had met Katrina. The girl had looked him straight in the eye with a face like carved wood, and Sir John had passed whistling on up the corridor.

By six o'clock that afternoon the terrace of the Hotel Ampezzo basked undisturbed in the rays of the departing sun. Mrs. Watson had finished her tea and with Dorothy by her side rejoiced audibly at the absence of the obnoxious Randolph. In her satisfaction she was even willing to pass over the defection of the Honorable Alexander Basset, who had been singularly remiss in his attentions that day.

"I am glad to see, Dorothy," observed Mrs. Watson, "that the soldiers are less in evidence this afternoon. As all travelers should, I bow to the law of the country in which I am, but it is annoying to have one's privacy intruded upon. Also, it can not fail to give a bad impression of the place to new arrivals. Here is one now."

A traveling carriage had drawn up in front of the hotel, the heads of the panting horses hanging low after their hard climb, and Mme. Carini had advanced to welcome the one occupant, a middle-aged man of prosaic appearance. One glance at the clumsy, unpressed garments, the long, flimsy shoes, told Dorothy he was an Italian, from whom nothing of interest was to be expected. Then suddenly she sat upright.

"Good-evening," the man was saying, "the signora has, I believe, a guest named Randolph?"

Mme. Carini drew away from him in obvious suspicion. "You ask——" she began.

"If you have a guest named Randolph," repeated the newcomer impatiently. "If he is here, present this card, if you please."

But Mme. Carini made no movement to receive the card.

"Mr. Randolph——" she hesitated, and then came to a dead stop, looking at the newcomer.

"Mr. Randolph what?" cried the man angrily, his voice reverberating through the silent afternoon. "I ask if he stays at the hotel. It is a simple question."

"Quite so, and what does the signore desire with Mr. Randolph?" For all the suavity of the words, the Italian sounds came oddly from Von Glockner's guttural throat. The unwelcome guest turned hotly on his questioner.

"I desire to see him. I desire not to explain my affairs to a gaping universe of idiots. This is a hotel; Mr. Randolph stays here or he does not. Which is it, then?"

Despite the petulance of the demand there was in it the unmistakable note of one accustomed to command, and the proprietress in Mme. Carini's soul was impressed. Helplessly she glanced from the stranger to Von Glockner. But the Captain was neither a hotel-keeper nor was he easily overawed.

"You have come to see Mr. Randolph?" he asked calmly, eyeing the Italian.

"Four times I have said so," retorted the traveler. "Permit me to repeat it for the fifth—I have come to see Mr. Randolph; is he here?"

In reply the Captain raised a whistle to his lips and blew upon it.

"I regret to inform the signore that he is under arrest," he said, as two soldiers sprang into being behind him.

The stranger leaped backward towards his carriage.

"You——" he cried, but the Austrian held up his hand.

"The signore has heard what I have said. Bring that man to my room!" he ordered in German to his men, and turning his back upon the Italian, strode into the hotel.

CHAPTER VI

A TOBACCO SHOP DOOR

THE main street of Ampezzo was crowded along its white and dusty length with a heterogeneous collection of German, English and American tourists,

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townspeople and peasants. From the raised veranda where she sat the whole scene was before Dorothy. Restlessness rather than the pot of tea in front of her had brought her there. Since the arrest of the traveler the day before for the crime of inquiring for the fugitive Randolph, the hotel had become intolerable. The episode had endowed with new life the flagging gossip and made of it an affliction not to be endured.

It was not exciting. At frequent intervals carriages passed, more rarely an automobile, while dusty, tired-looking pedestrians swung by in an almost unbroken stream.

The sight of them angered Dorothy. Struggle as she might, as each new specimen of the genus tramped past she constrasted him with the straight, green-clad figure who had vanished in the woods beyond Pocol. The comparison was unfavorable, of course, but it was not that which annoyed her. It was the fact that she made it at all. It was more than humiliating—a man who danced with servants, who was afraid to show his face, who was more than suspected of robbery, whose very name could not be mentioned!

The catalogue of Randolph's sins was interrupted by the thought of the stranger who had asked for him. His fate no one knew. One guest, more inquisitive or more daring than his fellows, had ventured to approach Von Glockner upon the subject. The Captain had merely twisted his mustaches higher and higher and stared upon his questioner until the intruder had muttered some incoherent excuse and fled.

And if such was the treatment of those who interested themselves in him, what was in store for Randolph himself? With an involuntary shudder, Dorothy turned to the mountains at the southern end of the valley. More than ever they seemed like the walls of some colossal fortress, impregnable to all the armed might of the Emperor. And so they were—for between them and the village of Ampezzo ran the low insignificant stone wall of the boundary, on the other side of which no uniformed Austrian dared to set his foot.

Comforted, she turned—and started from her seat, her face white and the hand, outstretched for the tea-cup, shaking.

He was almost opposite her, striding along as unconcernedly as though the very soldiers he passed had not been beating the fields for him forty-eight hours before! With an instinct akin to that of the hunted ostrich thrusting his head into the sand of the desert, Dorothy's eyes fled from the tall figure and fastened themselves on the tablecloth. She was too late. She heard the steps halt, knew that he was looking at her. In a minute his voice sounded in her ears:

"This is good luck, Miss Watson. I hoped to see you, but hardly to stumble on you the first thing."

She looked up at him with wide, astonished, unbelieving eyes. He held his hat in his hand, his shoulders were level with the railing of the veranda, and above it rose his face, tanned and smiling. Was the man crazy, or was she, or the world? She had last seen him scampering for Italy and safety. Since then he had been hunted like a fox through the fields of the valley; now he stood in the street of Ampezzo and smiled at her! She did not smile in return; she only sat and stared, pale and white-lipped.

"With your permission," he remarked, "I will join you," and before she could consent or refuse he had walked up on the veranda and seated himself at the table.

The assurance of his manner, the contempt for the danger that she knew hemmed him in, completed her bewilderment and destroyed all sense of the reality of the scene. She had meant to warn him, to tell him to seek cover again, if there were still time. Instead, as she looked from the hunted man at the table to an Austrian officer standing a few feet away, two lines from "Lochinvar" rose to her lips in mocking parody of the situation:

> "And now I am come, with this lost love of mine,
> To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine."

she quoted, speaking her confused thoughts aloud.

"I beg your pardon!" It was Randolph's turn to be amazed. A great wave of crimson dashed over the girl's face as she realized what she had said.

"I—I—I've been reading Scott. It was running in my head. It's a fine poem, don't you think so? So spirited, so—er—romantic. And then it's about mountains and Highlanders and this is in the mountains, of course, and so—and so——" Randolph's astonished eyes were on her and she ended desperately. "And so I read it, you see."

"Quite so," remarked Randolph.

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"It's very silly of me," Dorothy went on, with a forced laugh of misery. "It got in my head, somehow. Don't things ever get in your head?" she added defiantly.

"Well, I hope so," laughed Randolph. "Once in a while. One of the things in there now, as I told you, is that I'm glad to see you. By the way, your tea's all gone, isn't it? Why not try that cup of wine you spoke of?"

"No, no!" Dorothy cried, her own confusion overwhelmed in the fresh sense of the man's peril. "You must not, you must not!"

"Must not?" echoed Randolph, no longer attempting to conceal his astonishment as she rose in trembling excitement from the table. Then, since she remained standing, he, too, rose to his feet. "Must not what?" he repeated.

"You can't stay here. You—oh," she broke off with a gasp as her eye swept his figure for the first time. "You're disguised!" she cried, and in the exclamation was a note of horror-stricken awe.

Randolph threw back his head with a laugh that spun the officer in the road on his heel to look curiously at the strange pair upon the veranda.

"Disguised! Well, I should hope so!" He glanced down in comic disgust at the checked, baglike trousers he wore, and raised his hand to the loud necktie and high, white collar, the points of which projected obviously and painfully into his brown neck. "They're the latest style at Belluno, though. You mustn't laugh at them—it's not polite."

"Polite! I'm not trying to be polite."

"It would, of course, be quite unnecessary," remarked the man, but, although his lips still smiled, his eyes had grown grave.

Out of the corner of her eye Dorothy saw the Austrian staring rudely at them and new fear mingled with rage that she should care so much more than the man.

"Will you go?" she demanded, and then, as Randolph made no move, she cried again: "*Will* you go?"

"Why, no," said the American slowly. "No, I won't. I've only just come."

"Why did you come? Why were you mad enough to come back? Don't you know—oh, why *did* you come?"

The man put his hands on the table and leaned across it towards her. "Chiefly to see you," he said with an emphasis which even then brought a flush into Dorothy's white cheek. Her eyes dropped before his, but they fell again upon the officer in the road and in that instant the flush vanished.

"Oh, go, go!" she wailed in despair. "Won't you go?"

"I'll be hanged if I go!" Randolph's jaw shut hard upon the words. "Why should I? I came to see you and now——"

"Then *I* will!" Brushing past him, Dorothy ran down the steps and out into the road. Fearful of attracting attention, she did not dare to run, but she walked fast, without a glance behind, intent only on forcing Randolph by her absence to return to his senses. If he did, no one had recognized him and he might yet make his way clear of the town.

She had not gone a hundred yards when she heard his step behind her. To attempt to out-distance him was ridiculous; in despair she stopped and faced him. A few feet from her he halted also. For a second they looked at each other; then he began to walk more slowly on toward the Hotel Ampezzo in quiet confidence that she would accompany him.

"Hasn't this gone far enough?" he asked.

Dragged onward, helpless under the spell of his strong persistence, she made no answer and they walked forward in silence.

"I really think I am entitled to an answer," he said at length.

"To what?" she answered, stopping in the road, half-choked with fear on his account and unreasoning anger on her own.

"To this." He stopped also, and once more they faced each other on the white street of Ampezzo. "I came here looking for you. I found you and you run as though I were a mad dog. Whatever else I may be, I'm not that. I don't bite, Miss Watson. I came to see you. You ——"

The blast of an automobile horn, hard upon them, cut him short. Involuntarily the girl jumped back to the side of the road and Randolph followed her before he saw that it was not for them but for a lumbering ox-cart the warning had been sounded. But the automobile, blocked by the clumsy obstruction, did not pass and he glanced impatiently back at it.

"Oh, hang it!" Dorothy heard him mutter, and the next instant the door of a tobacco shop had closed upon his heels, only to be flung open a second later by a man who had leaped down from the automobile.

A minute before Dorothy had prayed to

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be rid of him. Now that she was, she stood in the gutter staring at the door through which he had vanished. "I came to see you. I came to see you," she breathed with parted lips. She did not insult her intelligence by pretending not to understand the words. Their meaning flushed her face, but it was with a happiness which left no place in her mind even for the brutal rudeness of his summary departure. "I came to see you," she breathed again, staring at the door of the tobacco shop.

It opened and the stranger of the automobile emerged. As their eyes met, the man started back with a guttural exclamation of surprise. He was the German Dorothy had encountered at Pocol, the unknown who had demanded of her Randolph's name, who had since been introduced to her as Herr Horb of Berlin, and whose interest in her movements had been manifested more than once.

"If the Fräulein is going to the hotel," he said with a formal bow, "she will permit me to take her in my car?"

"I'd rather walk," said Dorothy bluntly.

Herr Horb's lashes half closed over his puckered eyes, but beneath their veil Dorothy fancied that she detected a fleeting glance at the interior of the shop.

"As the Fräulein pleases," he said dryly. "The hill is by most avoided."

He had taken a step towards his machine when Dorothy with quick intuition changed her mind. At Pocol the man had shown his interest in Randolph, now he had rushed after him into the shop. The look with which the refusal of his invitation had been received meant something; as Dorothy read it, it meant that Horb knew she preferred to walk because she intended to walk with Randolph, and that he intended to watch. Against Randolph, it seemed to the girl, every man's hand was raised. If Horb wished to catch him, it would not be through her that he would succeed.

She fairly beamed upon the German as she walked to the car. "Since you are so kind," she said, waiting for him to help her in, "I think I will ride after all."

Herr Horb's heavy brows met in a puzzled frown. "Is it that American ladies are always changeable?" he asked.

Dorothy seated herself with a laugh. "It is always a woman's privilege, Herr Horb. What a very handsome car!"

For answer, Horb waved to the chauffeur and the very handsome car puffed slowly up the hill to the Hotel Ampezzo.

"Your escort departed with suddenness, is it not? Who is he, then?"

If he had planned to catch her napping, the trick was a miserable failure. Dorothy radiated child-like candor upon him: "A friend." And then, with his interrupted words singing in his ears, "He was most interesting when he left."

Herr Horb rose greedily to the bait.

"Indeed? And what was it, then, that he was saying?"

"I think," said Dorothy, her eyes fastened on the peak of Antelao, a white spot above the green larches, "I think his last words were 'Hang it.'"

And at the doorway of the Hotel Ampezzo she left a sorely perplexed and very angry German.

CHAPTER VII

A BIT OF CONVERSATION

THE anger of Herr Horb would not have been diminished had his eyes been able to look back into the street from which the car had whisked him. Randolph had seen him drive off with Dorothy, and now followed the progress of the automobile with eyes shining under gathered brows. When it had disappeared he reentered his late refuge.

"Probably you think I am crazy," he remarked in Italian, seating himself on a stool in front of the counter. The broad plain face of the middle-aged woman behind it smiled a cheerful greeting.

"Perhaps. Men are, they say. The signore no more than most."

"Thank you," laughed the American. "I do not think I am, but there were particular reasons why I did not wish to meet the gentleman who was so eager to see me."

"That," retorted the woman, "a blind man could see. Therefore, when you ran in there," she jerked a thumb backward toward a door, "I told him there was no one here. It was fortunate he did not believe me, for it is a sin to deceive."

"Under the circumstances," said Randolph quite gravely, "our consciences are, of course, quite clear. But if he did not believe you, why did he leave?"

"What else was there for him to do?" answered the woman with a touch of the

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stolidity of the peasant. "Is it my shop or his?"

"Signora, I am vastly indebted to you," Randolph rose to his feet with a grand bow.

"It was nothing," said the woman and went on dusting the shelves behind her.

Quite deliberately Randolph filled his cigarette-case from the box on the counter, paid for his purchase, and smoked in silence.

"Is he staying at the Hotel Ampezzo?" he asked at length.

"Who? Oh, the man who came after you —signore, I never saw him before. But it is you who should know that. Are you not staying there yourself?"

"Um—well, I was. The truth is," he added, "I have been away for a few days."

"Ah, then the signore has not heard the news?" The rare delight of fresh gossip proving even stronger than her passion for work, she laid down her cloth to speak with due solemnity. "At the Hotel Ampezzo there has been a robbery."

"No?" said Randolph, not greatly impressed by this intelligence. "Who was robbed?"

"The Emperor."

"The Emperor!" Randolph sat bolt upright on his stool and stared at the woman. "The Emperor is not here."

"No, but it is the same thing, they say. It was one of the soldiers who was attacked and despatches taken. So now the soldiers have the hotel. It is very exciting. Such a hunt as there was two nights ago up there! It is a pity the signore was away. He would have enjoyed it."

"Very likely. Did they catch anybody?"

"No, at least they say not, but then these Austrians"—all the Italian in the woman flamed for a second—"these Austrians, one never knows what they do!" and she scrubbed away with her cloth as if, instead of imaginary dust from a counter, she were wiping the detested Teuton from the face of the earth.

The American watched her with a grave face for a minute before he finally wished her good-afternoon and stepped out into the street again. The short time he had spent in the shop had been sufficient to empty the village of its afternoon activity. Black shadows hid the fields under the mountain walls; down the valley the white line of the Reichstrasse merged into the dusk; high on the hillside, lights were already visible in the front of the Hotel Ampezzo.

It was close to the dinner hour there, but Randolph made no move to return to the hotel that had sheltered him for many weeks. Instead he made his way to an obscure inn patronized only by penurious German pedestrians, and ate in silence a lonely and uninviting meal. When he left, the last of the daylight had long been gone from the highest of the peaks, the moon had not yet risen and the whole valley lay wrapped in darkness.

Leaving the highroad, he followed with the sureness of long familiarity a footpath that led, in devious undecided windings, upward through the fields. One of its vacillating twists brought him close to the belt of woods that girded the valley. With a few long strides, falling noiselessly on the yielding grass, Randolph was within the deeper shadows of the larches.

Winding up over steep shoulders, dipping down again into stony gullies, he made his way through the night, until, at the edge of a little clearing, he stopped with a short breath of relief.

Directly beneath him was the rear of the Hotel Ampezzo, a stream of light from an open doorway falling on a pile of rubbish and revealing the entrance to the kitchen. For an instant Randolph looked doubtfully at it. "Plenty of time for that," he muttered. "Now I'll see if she's in the old place." Turning back into the shadow, he passed, still cautiously, above the tennis-court onward towards the bench and the view of Antelao.

The long detour had consumed time. Before he reached his destination the broad face of the moon peered from under the shoulder of the mountain and the darkness of the valley fled before it.

"Queer," he muttered again, "deuced queer, I wish——" But the wish was never uttered, for from the bench he had come so far to visit came voices, clear and distinct in the solemn silence.

"My dear Mrs. Watson, I assure you that I have no resentment whatsoever. It is true that your daughter used some harsh expressions, but such unpleasant experiences are a tremendous strain. Let us consider that the unfortunate incident never occurred."

"It is very kind of you to look at the matter in this light, Mr. Basset," Mrs. Watson's voice was resonant with affable stateliness. "We have good reason to congratulate

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ourselves that it was no worse. Think of it, Dorothy—a ruffian like that, right here in our very midst! Why he might have knocked me down, he might—I don't know what he might not have done!"

In the ensuing silence Randolph twisted and turned in the effort to see as well as hear. Once he even started forward as though about to descend boldly to the bench. Changing his mind, he shrank back into the shadow of a larch and waited.

"I knew at once that there was something wrong with the man," remarked the Honorable Alexander, "but I hardly liked to interfere, you know, especially since Miss Watson——"

He seemed in no hurry to finish the sentence and Dorothy spoke for the first time.

"Well," she asked coldly, "since what?"

"Since he appeared to be an—er—friend of yours," returned Basset awkwardly.

"Nonsense!" cried Mrs. Watson sharply. "One has to be polite to the people one meets, but I should never have permitted anything approaching friendship."

"You will see, however," said Basset, "that it was a disagreeable position for me. Of my own accord I should certainly have said nothing, but it was quite impossible to evade Von Glockner's questions without appearing to ally ourselves with this Ashburn, or Randolph, as I still think of him. As it has turned out, that would have been more than annoying to us all."

Twice in the course of this short speech he had contrived to speak of himself and the Watsons as of one party. Mrs. Watson noted it with inward satisfaction. Dorothy noted it too—and resented it.

"Were you afraid that you might be arrested, like that Italian gentleman?" she asked.

"Dorothy!" cried Mrs. Watson, aghast at this new outbreak of her unruly daughter, but Basset saw an advantage and pushed it.

"No, Miss Watson. As it happens, I have never had reason to fear the police of any country. What I did think was that you might not fancy being associated with one who is—I must speak plainly—one who is a disreputable character and worse."

"It was really very kind of you," said Mrs. Watson hurriedly.

"Very," put in Dorothy, and at the tone Randolph bit his lips to choke back a laugh. "I've half a mind to give that young man an unpleasant surprise," he thought.

"By the way, Caprile, the Italian Miss Watson spoke of, has been escorted over the border. It was fortunate for him that he could prove his identity. It appears that he is rather a high official in the Italian Government."

"Which proves, of course," remarked Dorothy, "how utterly disreputable Mr. Randolph is."

Basset turned in his seat to face the girl as he delivered his thrust: "That depends, Miss Watson, on how you regard the profession of a spy. In general, I believe, gentlemen have a prejudice against it."

"I am not a gentleman," answered Dorothy. "Perhaps that is why I do not understand what Caprile has to do with Mr. Randolph's being a spy."

"Permit me to enlighten you." Randolph heard Basset rise to his feet, a snarl of temper under the suave, deliberate words. "You are aware that on a border such as this there is always danger of spies; you are also aware that the Austrian regulations against the making of photographs or plans of any nature which might be of assistance to a possible enemy are very strict and the penalties rigidly enforced. Mr. Ashburn stays at this hotel under the assumed name of Randolph. Of his intimacy with the natives, who are thoroughly Italian at heart, you have, if I remember right, already had some disagreeable evidence. At the last dance——"

"Mr. Basset," interposed Mrs. Watson with dignity, "you will oblige me by not discussing such indecorous proceedings in the presence of my daughter."

"Pardon me, I was merely endeavoring to explain to Miss Watson. In the room of Ashburn or Randolph, Count von Glockner discovered a vast quantity of papers, maps, pictures and other information of a more than suspicious nature. There is reason to believe that the owner was warned of his danger. At any rate he did not return to the hotel. But the man who was despatched to headquarters with the papers was attacked and robbed—of course by this Randolph, or at his instigation."

"Why 'of course'?" demanded Dorothy.

"Because there could be no one else sufficiently interested to commit the serious crime of robbing an Imperial messenger. Moreover, Ashburn has not yet returned. Instead, Caprile appears, an Italian official looking for his tool and ignorant of his

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blundering. He is arrested, but his official position protects him and he is released. Not every one has such protection, so that it is fortunate that Mr. Ashburn has removed himself, I trust permanently."

He had told his story well; save for the little snarl that few would have detected, there was no evidence of personal interest in the affair. The impression was deep and Basset clever enough to leave it unspoiled.

"If you will excuse me," he said after a pause, "I promised a man to have a game of billiards to-night. I've told you all there is to tell, I think, but there really isn't much."

"We are greatly indebted to you," said Mrs. Watson as he moved off.

"I wish, Dorothy," Mrs. Watson broke the silence at length, "I wish that your manner to Mr. Basset would change."

"Why?" Dorothy's bluntness could be most irritating.

"My dear, you should be able to answer that question yourself."

"Do you mean that you want me to marry him?"

"Dorothy!" Mrs. Watson was shocked. "In my day young girls were not expected to think of such things, much less talk of them, until the time came when they were asked."

"I assure you I am not thinking of marrying him, mother."

The elder woman struggled hard for self-composure. "After what Mr. Basset said to-night, you surely can not have any doubt about this Ashburn individual?"

"Since Mr. Basset told us that he had removed himself, it can not matter what I think," was the girl's response.

With a sigh of despair, Mrs. Watson gathered up her wraps and, leaving her perplexing daughter on the bench, rolled heavily down the path to the hotel.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE LARCHES

HER mother's slow step was still audible when the girl's view of the mountain-guarded valley was cut off by the tall incarnation of her thoughts. With a quick catching of the breath Dorothy had half risen from the bench when Randolph dropped into the seat Basset had vacated.

"Just a minute, Miss Watson. I appear to be disreputable, but I certainly am not dangerous. Moreover, I really must apologize for my abrupt departure this afternoon. It was all due to that beastly fellow in the automobile. He *will* turn up when he's not wanted the most."

"Where did you come from?" breathed the girl.

"From about ten feet up that bank. Oh, yes, in addition to being a spy and a robber, I am an eavesdropper. But it was a very interesting conversation and I am not in the least ashamed of having listened to it."

Even in the moonlight the girl's face showed crimson as she turned it from him.

"Do you happen to know," he asked, "who it was that learned my real name?"

Dorothy wheeled suddenly on him, her eyes blazing: "Then it is true! It is true, and yet you dare to follow me about and hide behind trees to listen! Why should I tell you if I did know?"

"There's no reason unless you happen to want to," retorted Randolph. "Personally I have a mild sort of idea it was that worthy individual Basset. It seems to me that he and I will have a score to settle some day."

"Threats!" Dorothy cried scornfully. "How will you settle it? Are you going to beat him, too, in the dark, like that poor soldier?"

"What do you mean?" he demanded with ominous calm.

"It is plain enough. You heard what Mr. Basset said. Now you sneak through the dark to threaten him! Why don't you go? You have the papers you were paid to get. Take them to this Caprile and get your money and be done with it. I warned you once, but——"

"Yes, I know you did," snapped Randolph, "and I heard what that cur Basset said about it, too. I think I will have an interview with that young man right now."

"Stop!" Dorothy's order halted him at the edge of the path. "You mustn't go there. Don't you know the soldiers are still here? You've robbed his man, and it is a serious offense."

The echo of Basset's words brought a grim smile to the man's angry face.

"By Jove, I was forgetting that!" he murmured. "It would be devilish awkward if they did get me now." As he looked back at the frightened girl standing with outstretched hands as though to pluck him from destruction, all his wrath vanished. "You're

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awfully good, you know," he said simply, his eyes fastened on her slender beauty.

"Oh, go!" she cried. "Go away! *Why* won't you go?"

"I'm not going before I tell you one thing. I didn't rob that man, and I don't know who did. Why, Great Scott!" he blurted out, struck by a new thought, "the papers are gone!" For an instant he gazed helplessly at the girl in front of him. "Who's got 'em now, do you suppose? I tell you there never was such a mess!"

Dorothy stared in bewilderment at this new development. "You did not take them!" she gasped.

"Of course not. I wish I had—then I'd know where they are. And now they're hunting me and I can't show my face."

"But—but you couldn't anyway!" Dorothy cried.

"I can't now—that's certain. Confound that fellow, if he's——"

He stopped short, for the girl's hands had closed upon his coat and her slight strength was pushing him frantically toward the shelter of the woods. A man's heavy footsteps sounded on the path from the hotel and the guttural voice of Herr Horb rumbled through the night:

"Ach, Fräulein Watson, is it you, indeed?"

Randolph's reluctant, crab-like progress backward changed to a violent leap into the darkness, as Dorothy, conspicuous in her white dress, spun about to block the progress of the portly German.

"Surely you are not alone, Fräulein! I heard voices. I——"

"I do not see——" Dorothy interrupted in anger at the man's presuming to question her. Then, realizing that anger was not her strongest weapon, she stepped toward him with a smile: "I am alone now, Herr Horb, but you did hear voices. I was talking with—" Dorothy hesitated, felt the spectacled gaze upon her, and rushed headlong into a fatal blunder, "—with Sir John Berwick."

At that moment Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Berwick was smoking a cigar on the veranda, where he had been since dinner and where Horb had left him not two minutes before. The moonlight was not bright enough for Dorothy to read the expression on the German's face, but she did not need that to tell her that something was wrong.

"Indeed so? And has Sir John gone already?"

From the darkness behind her came the crash of a heavy fall, and with it Randolph's voice raised in anger. An instant later a pistol flashed above her, the echoes rolling from the mountain rocks and thundering through the valley.

To Dorothy it was the signal for the deluge. A chorus of screams from the hotel mingled in her ears with the reverberations of the shot. From drawing-room and billiard-room, from terrace, veranda and garden, poured a flood of startled men and women, filling the night with shouts and questions. For them Dorothy had neither eyes nor ears. She knew only that as she stood in the little patch of moonlight, a blue-clad figure, a pistol in his hand, bounded past her and with a jingle of spurs and saber vanished in the woods.

It was Von Glockner. Behind him ran half a dozen of his men; from remote corners and paths others closed in fast; below her, on the level floor of the valley, Dorothy saw lights flash suddenly; the echoes of the mountains roared again in answer to a quick succession of signal shots. The chase was on once more and this time the quarry had a scantier start.

CHAPTER IX

PIETRO TO THE RESCUE

RANDOLPH, retreating noiselessly along the black shadow pathway, had passed in a few yards once more into the obscurity of the woods and had waited, his ears alert to catch the first evidence of the persistent intruder's departure. The murmur of voices came from the clearing and then, from behind, without warning, a man collided with him.

The newcomer was a big man and moving rapidly. Under the shock the American staggered, his foot slipped on the steep grassy slope, and together the two pitched down into the bottom of one of the innumerable little gullies that roughened the ground beneath the larches. The cry of anger that Dorothy had heard was wrung from Randolph when his unknown assailant, struggling to rise to his feet, aimed a savage blow at him. Like the girl, the newcomer recognized the voice immediately. The blow was not repeated; instead, the American heard a panting whisper in his ear:

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"Signor Randolph, I did not know! Quick, they will be after us!"

That instant the flash of the pistol and the whimper of a bullet, fired at random in the direction of the noise and passing over their heads, gave conviction to his words.

"This way, this way!" breathed the man. Without more ado he set off running toward the mighty rock wall that shot up a sheer two thousand feet behind the hotel. It was well for Randolph that he was no novice in the mountains. There was a path up that cliff, he knew. It wound in endless zigzags along the face of the rock to a justly famous point of view and a bleak wilderness in which two fugitives might reasonably look forward to a death from exposure, even if they reached it. And of that there was little hope. No better target for rifle-practise could be asked than two men against the face of rock washed in moonlight. For every foot upward that one gained on that path, one traveled five to the side, and the poorest marksmen could not miss forever.

Knowing this, Randolph yet ran on. By now, indeed, he had no other choice. Behind him crashed Von Glockner's men, and the Austrian would not be balked twice. Before morning every foot of the woods would be searched and a cordon of sentries flung about them.

Where the trees stopped at the edge of a heap of crumpled rock and débris, his guide turned, panting, on the American. Before them rose the rock wall of the mountain, as Randolph had foreseen, white and glistening in the moonlight. Behind them and on each side, they heard the noise of the pursuit. The little distance they had gained in their flight would be lost again by a moment's delay.

"Follow me close now," breathed the man, and with no further explanation dashed straight at the piled débris. For an instant Randolph hesitated. Beyond there was nothing but impassable rock, for the one path was well to the side. To scramble over that mass of stone and gravel was to be crushed between Von Glockner's rifles and the unyielding mountain.

"Come, come!" shouted the other angrily, and Randolph realized with astonishment that he had thrown aside all attempt at secrecy. A minute later, when a bullet flattened itself against a rock ten feet above his head, he understood the reason. The time for secrecy had passed; escape was now a matter of speed and luck.

Both of these they had, for when they reached the summit of the débris they were suffering from no more serious wounds than scraped and bleeding hands and knees. Nevertheless, the bullets had come uncomfortably close. That none had struck was probably due to the fact that men blown with hard running are poor sharp-shooters. Yet, with that great wall rising now before their very faces, the end seemed only a question of one steady eye and hand among the soldiers below.

With an unspoken malediction on the blundering that had led him into such a trap, Randolph glanced ahead at his uninvited guide. Still on his hands and knees, the man dodged behind a boulder large enough to shield them for the moment. Rough-hewn by Nature in an angry mood, between the summit of the slope up which they had come and the face of the cliff itself, was a slight, irregular depression.

Along this they crawled, their breath coming in shrill whistles now, a trail of blood on the rocks over which they passed. They had but a few yards to go, and the soldiers were burdened with their rifles. Before the leaders had surmounted the débris, before it had occurred to any of the hunters that their quarry was doing more than skulking behind a convenient rock, Randolph and his companion had swung around a corner into a narrow cleft in the precipice. Instantly the American recognized the place as a cul-de-sac into which he had once strayed while on an aimless ramble.

"You're mad, man!" he gasped at the crawling figure ahead of him. "There's no way out of this!"

The guide merely glanced back with a grin of audacious joy upon his face and scrambled on. Where a slight fissure rent the bare front of the rock he stopped long enough to make certain that Randolph was following close, then flinging himself on his face, wriggled under a rock and was gone!

Before he imitated him, Randolph cast one glance behind. At the mouth of the cleft the tops of the larches swayed in the night breeze, the music of their rustling drowned in renewed shouts from their pursuers, now breasting the summit of the débris. There was no hope elsewhere, and in a second he, too, was flat upon his face.

A strong hand grasped him as he wound his way forward, and guided him to his feet. "Look up," whispered the voice of his guide

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in his ear. Dizzy as he was with the fatigue of the long run, Randolph's head swam as he obeyed. The two stood in blackness, dense and unrelieved save for one thing. Over their heads, as though at the end of a telescope of infinite length, a star glowed.

"Come," whispered the man again. "The Signor Randolph can climb, I know."

Cautiously, feeling his way through the darkness with the certainty of absolute familiarity, he led the way upward. He was right in saying that Randolph could climb. A master of mountaineering, the fissure, the darkness beneath and the star above had all told their story to the young man. He was in a *couloir*, one of those strange aids which Nature has consented to give in the heart of some of her most formidable peaks to adventurous climbers and which have received their name from their likeness to colossal chimneys. To Randolph they were no new experience. More than once he had wedged himself with knees and back between their walls and so, by sheer power of muscle, inched himself painfully upward from one slight foothold to the next. To do it now was merely to repeat in darkness and in earnest a favorite sport.

Never had be been blessed with a better guide. A whispered word, a touch in the dark, directed with infallible accuracy his hand and foot to the one safe hold. Steadily he mounted until in the exhilaration of the struggle not only the thought of fear but all memory of Von Glockner and his men was swept away in the delight that rewards the tried mountaineer.

"There's few that will take that in the dark," his companion said, speaking Italian as he had done from the first, but with a note of admiration in his voice. "If I had not known what you could do, I would never have brought you here."

They had passed through the *couloir* and were standing on a flat expanse of rock, out in the night once more. At their feet the cliff dropped sheer away to the woods from which still came the trampling of many feet and the shouts of Von Glockner's men.

"They're still hunting," answered Randolph, peering cautiously over the edge. "Is there any chance of their finding this place, Pietro?"

The native grinned. "There's more to coming up that chimney than finding it, signore. As I say, it is not every one who climbs like the signore."

"And not every one who is a friend like you," replied the American. "What brought you into this mess? Now they are after you as well as me."

"Poof," Pietro snapped his fingers with a gesture of Latin contempt. "The Austrian pigs, let them hunt—the exercise will do them good! Besides," he glanced sideways at his companions with a meaning smile, "I do not think they know just whom they are after. But the signore was away and safe. Why did he come back?"

"Why shouldn't I come back?" demanded Randolph. "I've done nothing, and anyway I wanted—" He stopped abruptly. Pietro Altieri was a good mountaineer, an excellent guide and a faithful servant; he was hardly the man with whom Randolph cared to discuss Miss Watson's share in his return. He was not quick enough, however, for the Italian wit of the peasant.

"Ah, ha, the signore wanted! Well, so did I—it is the same the world over, is it not? But also I wanted that Katrina should tell me where you were, for I have something of yours."

"By Jove!" Light dawned at length upon Randolph. "You took the papers! But why, man? They're nothing to you."

"No, they're nothing to me—but Katrina is. Also, the Austrians are pigs and the signore has been kind to me. Why," he looked out across the valley as though he were gazing into the secrets of the future, "why, all Summer have I worked for you, and the money you have given me is much. It is saved and, in the Fall, when the foreigners are gone and the hotel is closed, in the Fall Katrina comes to me. What do the Austrians matter? Over there," he jerked his thumb to the south, "no questions will be asked. And then they think it is the signore who robbed the man, not me."

In its mingled shrewdness and simplicity the brief story was characteristic of the man. Randolph held out his hand with a smile.

"Thank you, Pietro. You and Katrina will not suffer if we ever get clear of this mess. Have you the papers?"

"Not here," answered the Italian. "If you are rested, come. It is a long road before us."

A long road it was and a bad one to boot. From the rock on which they stood at the mouth of the chimney, an irregular ledge ran along the face of the precipice, in places

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wide enough for comfortable walking, in others so narrow that they could move forward only on their toes, inch by inch, their faces flat against the cliff, their arms spread out as though they hoped to cling to the bare rock. An hour of anxious, careful going took them into a shallow rock-strewn basin where a few blades of grass peered out here and there in the cold moonlight with patches of snow from the white crest of Sorapis creeping down to meet them.

Randolph looked about him with a curious eye. "I've never been here before," he muttered.

"Nor many others," chuckled his guide. "Come."

Pushing indefatigably on, he traversed the basin and plunged once more into a wilderness of rock. In some sheltered nook the occasional crunching of snow under his foot told Randolph that they were still following what the practical Baedeker describes as a "high level route," but of direction he had lost all notion. Content to trust himself to the man who had already risked so much for him and who that night had saved him from an Austrian bullet or an Austrian jail, he plodded on at the heels of the tireless Pietro.

It was a task which left him little leisure for other thought. Randolph counted himself—and was counted by others—a hardy walker and a cool-headed climber, but the work the Italian gave him that night proved well-nigh too much. With a sigh drawn from the depths of a weary heart, he noted, as they reached the bottom of an exceptionally stiff slide of graveled shingle, that Pietro had stopped for the first time in several hours. On three sides of them rose silent cliffs, down one of which they must have forced their way; at their feet, black in shadow, lay the waters of a little lake; and above it, hardly to be distinguished, save for the glimmer of the dying moon upon its incongruous tin roof, from the rocks on which it was built, stood a small cabin.

"But," Randolph stared about him, "but it's Lago Alto!"

"Precisely, signore," grinned Pietro. "It's Lago Alto—and, what is more, it is Italy."

"Then that's the Alto hut!" Randolph pointed stupidly at the cabin, while there danced through his brain the memory of the hot pea-soup and black bread he had once enjoyed within its walls.

"Precisely," repeated Pietro, "and as the signore knows, my brother is the care-taker. Come."

CHAPTER X

WANTED—A GUIDE

"IT IS really so beautiful that I am sorry we must leave it."

Mrs. Watson laid down her teacup and glanced about her with an unaffected sigh. The smiling landscape, the calm of the Summer afternoon, even the women working in the fields, were the same that she had beheld with Lady Berwick only a few days before. Only the woman that looked at them was different. Mrs. Watson was disheartened.

"But, my dear Mrs. Watson, why *do* you leave?" The Honorable Alexander Basset flicked the ashes from his cigarette into a teacup and lolled back in his chair, watching her from half-closed eyes.

"We are going back to America."

"America!" Basset's repose vanished as his eyes and mouth opened and he sat up staring. "America! Why——"

"Dorothy wants to go, so I suppose we will. It's no use staying now, anyway."

Mrs. Watson's eyes wandered across the green slopes to dwell upon the ruins of a wrecked dream. What the poor lady expected to find in Europe none knew less than herself, but certainly she had not found it.

"But——" Basset continued to stare at his companion, his tongue and lips searching vainly for words with which to answer the unexpected and unwelcome news. "America must be very interesting," he muttered lamely.

"I suppose so," answered Mrs. Watson. In the dark shadows under the cliffs of Tofana the long years unrolled themselves before her. She saw the two-story frame house she had once called home change into a magnificent structure with balconies and piazzas at every turn; she saw her husband rising toilfully step by step in the world of men, and her own ambition leaping unrestrained beyond his slow progress, out into the great world; she saw the day when the thin, nervous little man did not go to the office, when its doors were closed and his will was read, when she found herself alone, with one daughter to care for

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and several millions to do it with. She had tried hard. Dorothy should see more than she had ever seen, she had said, and in due time the new house, like the office, was closed and the dead husband's railroad carried them to New York and the steamer. Now it was over. Dorothy wanted to go back.

"I suppose so," repeated Mrs. Watson.

The Honorable Alexander shook himself together sufficiently to regard her with a languid smile.

"I have always wanted to visit the States. Perhaps——" he stopped as the ghost of a departed hope lighted Mrs. Watson's face.

"Oh, I hope you do!" she cried. "I want Dorothy——" Her mother's loyalty checked her. "You'd find it dull," she said, speaking more indirectly what was in her mind. "Our men are so busy—there is no society in America."

"I know there is some," answered Basset and bowed to his companion.

Mrs. Watson saw and heard and understood, and the shadows of Tofana fell upon her vision and dimmed it. As evidence of a changed heart, she poured herself another cup of tea and drank it slowly.

"Our stay here has been unfortunate," she said. "This Ashburn, or Randolph, person has been most disagreeable. The incident has upset my daughter to such an extent that she really insists upon returning. Very foolish, of course, but you understand, Mr. Basset?"

"Of course." Basset's lashes fell so low that there was only the smallest of sparkles behind them. "But now it is over."

"Yes." Mrs. Watson's tone lacked conviction. "Oh, I hate that man!" she burst out with all the frankness of her earlier years when what she won she had secured by fighting openly and unashamed. "I hate that Randolph. Dorothy won't believe he is bad. She's thinking of him now—I know she is. He ought to be in prison. I wish he was, and then we'd be happy again!"

The two slits under Basset's lashes seemed to narrow even more.

"Perhaps he will be—soon," he remarked. "Then I fancy Miss Dorothy will leave off thinking of him."

"I don't know," sighed Mrs. Watson. "I don't know what she'll do. Why don't they catch him, if they're ever going to? I think that Count von Glockner must be very stupid."

Basset opened his lips to answer, but thought better of it before the words came. He saw no advantage in informing the worthy lady that it was his and Von Glockner's opinion that Dorothy was the somebody who had first saved Ashburn from the clutches of the law. The news would have sent Mrs. Watson scampering back to America upon the first steamer. Basset certainly did not wish that. It would be a nuisance to follow, yet he had no intention of losing sight of them. Neither did he consider it necessary to announce that it was his pistol which had brought the chase upon Ashburn and Pietro. Dorothy was capable of inconvenient prejudices.

When he spoke it was more to himself than to Mrs. Watson.

"I'd like to know where they did go. There might be a cave or something. I wish I knew more about the beastly place. Can't get anything out of Von Glockner any more, either. He's worse than Berwick."

"Berwick?" Mrs. Watson pricked up her ears at the name. "What has Sir John to do with it?"

"How do I know?" snarled the Honorable Alexander, furious at his indiscretion. It was too much to ask him to explain that his only grievance against the two men was their refusal to be even decently polite to him. "He used to walk all about the place," he added hastily. "I thought that he might know how those chaps gave everybody the slip the other night."

"Perhaps he does!" she cried eagerly. "I'll ask him, anyway. Sir John, Sir John!"

At the other end of the terrace the tall Englishman laid down his paper and presented himself obediently at her tea-table.

"Sir John, you know all about this country, don't you?"

"Used to know a bit," said Berwick. "It's too stiff for me now; I'm getting old, you know."

"Then you can tell us how this Randolph person and his companion escaped. Is there——"

"By Jove," interrupted the baronet, "that reminds me! I must ask Katrina about that. She'll know, if anybody does.

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The best guide about here is her——" He stopped short, his eyes on Basset. "Really I couldn't tell you how they got off. Probably they outfooted them—slow fellows, these Austrians. Ah, isn't that my wife?"

Conjugal affection must have given power to Sir John's eyes, for no Lady Berwick was visible to any one save him. Nevertheless he made off with alacrity, leaving Mrs. Watson in the state of mild bewilderment which of late had become almost a habit with her, and the Honorable Alexander Basset with a sneer on his lips and a thoughtful gleam in his eyes.

Though the sneer had gone, the gleam was still there when he took his leave of Mrs. Watson and strolled into the hotel. In the office the girl's head was bent over her books and she did not look up as he entered. Katrina was too busy to pay much attention to the ordinary guests. When she was not waiting on them at table she was adding up their bills. That was what *forestieri* were created for—machines to turn food into money. There were exceptions, of course, habitués of long standing, whom it was possible to consider as human beings—and among these, as Basset well knew, was counted Thomas Randolph.

"Can I have some cigarettes, Katrina?"

The girl glanced up at the doorway, unlocked a drawer in the desk, produced an assortment of cigarettes, counted them carefully as the young man filled his case, took the money and locked it up with the tobacco in the desk. Then she went back to her figures without a word. The reception was hardly cordial, but Basset was not sensitive.

"Are there any good guides about now?" he asked indifferently, his back turned to her, ostensibly examining the pigeonholes of the hotel post-office.

"What do you want a guide for?"

Basset wheeled about to meet a direct, uncompromising stare. Somewhat to his surprise, he felt himself growing angry.

"I'd like to take an excursion, if you have no objection," he said.

"No, I have no objection," and Katrina blotted a page of the ledger and turned it over to begin upon a fresh one.

"Then perhaps you will be good enough to tell me if there are any guides."

"The village is full of them—everybody knows that," said Katrina.

"What I want is a good one." Basset swallowed his rising temper and contrived an ingratiating smile which was unfortunately lost upon the top of the girl's head as she bent over her books. "Now there's one they say is the best about here—Pietro, Pietro Altieri—could I get him to-morrow?"

The pen in Katrina's hand left a long black trail upon the white page of the Hotel Ampezzo's ledger. When she did not lift her eyes, the ingratiating smile above her turned into one of calculation.

"He makes his headquarters here, I believe," said Basset. "Will you tell him I want him to-morrow for two days?"

"Altieri is engaged, engaged for the season," muttered the girl.

"Yes, I know." Through the smoke of his freshly lighted cigarette Basset's eyes peered down upon her. "I know that Mr. Randolph took him. But now that Mr. Randolph is gone, he must be free. Will you tell him?"

"Altieri went away. Mr. Randolph gave him a holiday, a holiday for a week. He went to—to—to Innsbruck."

The thin lips of the Honorable Alexander parted in a cruel smile.

"Oh, to Innsbruck, for a week. Then I shall put off my excursion. Shall we say next Monday?"

The heavy covers of the ledger slammed together as Katrina jumped from her chair, her face flushed with rage.

"No, not next Monday, nor ever! Altieri is a guide, not a nurse. What do you want him for? You couldn't climb a stone wall!"

"You are merely insolent, my girl," returned Basset coldly. He meant to end the interview there; he had learned what he wished to know; had confirmed his suspicions, and there was nothing to be gained by a wrangle with a disrespectful servant-girl. Unfortunately for his plans, as he turned away he encountered the grinning countenance of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Berwick. The sight was too much for his composure. The Honorable Alexander Basset could swallow a goodly number of affronts if they were bestowed in private; public insults were another matter. His resentment flared up and mastered him.

"Altieri'll find he can't climb out of prison!" he cried, pointing to the mountain behind the hotel. "And you'll find it out,

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too, if you don't stop lying! Innsbruck! Innsbruck! He went up there somehow with that Randolph spy, and he won't dare show his face round here again—not while I'm here!"

As he flung out of the office Sir John gazed helplessly at Katrina's head, fallen on her ledger.

"It's no use crying," he said. "It's a beastly shame that fellow was born in England!"

CHAPTER XI

A FORCED MESSAGE

BY THE sacrifice of an amount of self-respect and reputation that he could ill afford to spare, the Honorable Alexander Basset had purchased the information that it was Altieri who had aided Randolph to escape. That Katrina was to marry the guide was common knowledge among all familiar enough with the life of Ampezzo to interest themselves in the simple affairs of the natives. A duller man than Basset could not have failed to connect the two facts and to draw from the inference that the girl was deeper in the secret than she would care to have appear.

Yet of what use he hoped to make of this clue the young man gave no sign. Outwardly his little piece of detective work bore no fruit; indirectly it was the cause of a keenly-felt humiliation to Dorothy. Boiling with choked indignation, Sir John Berwick strode from the office and the sobbing Katrina direct to his wife.

"Listen to me, Muriel!" he began.

Lady Berwick took one look at the straight figure above her and at once laid aside her copy of the precious *Times*.

"Muriel, this fellow Basset is intolerable."

"Well?" Lady Berwick's eye wandered a little wistfully toward the *Times*.

"And I won't have you know him."

"He's very well-connected," remarked Lady Berwick. "His people——"

"Hang his people! I won't have you know him!"

"John!" Lady Berwick hardly knew whether she intended the exclamation as a reproof or an evidence of dutiful attention. At least she thought no more of the newspaper by her side.

"I say," announced her husband, "that you mustn't know Basset! And as he seems to be a friend of Mrs. Watson and her daughter, you sha'n't know them, either!"

"Really, John, you are wild. I can't go about the place cutting people, you know. That sort of thing won't do at all. Besides they're a very decent sort; Americans, of course, but——"

"Why are they friends of Basset, then?" interrupted Berwick. As his lady was quite unable to answer this searching question, the moment's silence allowed the Baronet's heat to cool a little. "The truth is," he said, reaching for his wife's *Times*, "I'm fed up on Basset and all his affairs. Now mind you leave the whole lot alone, there's a good fellow."

Lady Berwick looked at the expanse of paper Sir John spread before his face and knew that the edict had been promulgated.

"I'm sorry about Dorothy," she said. "She seemed a nice girl. That's my *Times* you have, John."

That evening when Dorothy Watson approached the fire in the drawing-room of the Hotel Ampezzo, Lady Berwick rose hastily and in the dreary chill of her own room sought a refuge from the necessity of immediate rudeness. Yet quick though she was, she was not quick enough. Vaguely the American understood. It was only one more reason for her to yearn for the closed home across the Atlantic.

She had her way at length. Too weary with disappointment to contest the point any longer, Mrs. Watson forced her stout frame one afternoon reluctantly over the stretch of hot road between the Hotel Ampezzo and the village to arrange with the local agency for a passage homeward. Her daughter and the Honorable Alexander accompanied her, but their presence added nothing to the gaiety of the occasion.

Half-way up the hill on the return journey, Mrs. Watson's patience deserted her. In the middle of the road she stopped, scarlet with heat, vexation and shortness of breath.

"I don't know what's the matter with you," she gasped. "You haven't said a word, Dorothy; you act as if you were going to a funeral. Do you think I'm doing this to please myself?"

Dorothy bit her lip. Family quarrels were always distasteful, but particularly public ones.

"It's very good of you, mother," she an-

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s vered. "I don't feel like talking this afternoon."

A bead of perspiration which had formed upon Mrs. Watson's forehead rolled slowly down her nose. She dashed it impatiently off and with the gesture lost what little remained of her scanty store of self-control.

"You never do feel like it! You're thinking of that Randolph man, that's what it is! You're always thinking of him. He's disgraceful, the whole thing's disgraceful. You ought——"

"Mother!" Dorothy interrupted the half-hysterical tirade with a stern dignity that startled the observant Basset. "I don't care to discuss Mr. Randolph, if you please."

"I'm not discussing him!" snapped Mrs. Watson, too wrought up to heed the danger signals displayed in her daughter's countenance. "He's not fit to discuss! He's vulgar and disreputable and worse, and you ought to be ashamed to——"

Before Basset this was too much for even Dorothy's sense of filial duty. "Mother!" she cried again and this time so sharply that Mrs. Watson stopped, half-frightened. For a second the girl surveyed the two—the woman, still puffing, conscious that she had made herself ridiculous and by that thought driven still further into her riot of futile revolt; the man leaning indolently upon his stick and waiting.

"I do not consider Mr. Ashburn either vulgar or disreputable. I do not expect ever to meet him again, but if I do, I shall be very glad. In the meantime I do not see any need to discuss the question."

For the time at least she removed all possibility of discussing the question by proceeding to breast the second half of the steep ascent to the Hotel Ampezzo at a pace which Mrs. Watson did not dare to follow. Basset elected to remain with his ally, but he found little to say to her as they toiled upward together in Dorothy's footsteps. After they had parted at the door he remained upon the terrace until the dressing-bell rang.

The fruit of his meditation was revealed that evening when he sauntered into the office where Katrina sat, immersed as usual in her ledgers. Mme. Carini had condescended to partake of coffee on the terrace with some favored guests, and the combination of moonlight and a warm night had emptied the corridors and salon.

A blot of ink dropped upon the neat page as Basset's shadow fell across the desk, but the girl wrote on more busily than ever. At last, when the ink was dry upon the ledger and still the shadow had not moved, she raised her eyes and saw that he held a letter in his hand.

"What sort?" she demanded briefly, reaching for the stamp-drawer.

"Thank you," Basset seated himself on the edge of the desk and studied the toe of his pump. "Thank you, this letter doesn't need a stamp."

Katrina picked up her pen, turned over a page, and resumed her writing.

"You see," remarked the Honorable Alexander, "it's going to be delivered by hand."

"The porter's outside," retorted Katrina.

"He has nothing to do with it. The fact is"—Basset abandoned the study of his toe and turned his eyes suddenly upon the girl—"you are to deliver it."

"I?"

Basset smiled at the angry face turned up to him before he threw the letter across the desk.

"Why not? It's for a friend of yours. You know the address, I fancy."

In a confused scrawl quite unlike the neat handwriting of the Honorable Alexander Basset, Katrina read across the face of the envelope the words:

THOMAS RANDOLPH ASHBURN, ESQ.,
℅ Pietro Altieri.

"You can supply the rest, eh?" Basset leaned across the desk until his face was close to the girl. "Because if you can't, perhaps Captain von Glockner will."

Holding the letter at arm's length as though it held a mysterious poison, Katrina stared at it. Then suddenly she flung the thing away and burst into a quivering laugh:

"You fool! He's in Italy. Let them get him there, if they can!"

The Honorable Alexander calmly picked up the letter and handed it back to her.

"Altieri won't be in Italy always—or if he is, he will be hungry there. Also, you are in Austria and an Austrian subject." He paused for a moment and his eyes sought the ceiling. "In one respect prison is like heaven—there are no marriages there."

"Bah!" Katrina flung down the letter for the second time. "This is foolish talk."

Basset brought his eyes down from the ceiling to face the girl with more sternness than he had yet shown.

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"Possibly. It depends altogether, however, upon what you do."

"On what I do! I do nothing."

"Oh yes you do! Listen to me. Altieri assaulted the Austrian— Oh, I know—" he waved his hand as though to brush aside the angry gesture of the girl. "That is a crime, a serious crime. You knew of it; perhaps you helped him; certainly you have not told what you know. That is also a crime. Do you understand?"

Katrina faced him, her arms on her hips, her head high.

"Well?" she demanded.

"Well, if I chose I could have you sent to prison. One word—it is quite simple. I do not speak that word—why?"

He looked at the girl and the girl looked at him, but she did not answer the question. "Because," Basset resumed, "I wish you no harm. You think I do, but there you are mistaken. Also you have made a frightful mess of everything. You have let Altieri ruin himself and Randolph as well. There was nothing against Randolph—not a thing in the world—until you stirred up this robbery. Now——" a shrug of the shoulders finished the sentence. "But there's one way to straighten it out—let Randolph have this letter. It is important."

Katrina stared at the pale eyes that leaned across the desk, at the carefully-curled blond mustache and the thin lip it did not altogether hide.

"I don't believe you," she said.

"My dear girl,"—with contemptuous indifference Basset drew back, reached for a cigarette and lighted it—"it doesn't matter what you believe. The fact is that if you don't have this letter delivered, Altieri will starve in Italy, because nobody will hire a man who can't cross the border without being arrested. You think Randolph will help him; well, he won't. Randolph will be so busy trying to help himself he won't trouble with starving guides. No work, no pay—that's an old rule you ought to understand by this time. Moreover, there is such a thing as extradition. You don't understand that? Extradition is the legal process by which they get hold of criminals who have fled to another country—to Italy, for example. It's quite common and very easy. You didn't really think Altieri was safe on the other side of the stone fence yonder, did you?"

The ghost of a smile puckered the muscles of his eyes as he watched his words sink deep into the peasant's mind. Extradition! She had not thought of that. There in the mountain-sheltered valley of Ampezzo she had only the carriages of the tourists to tell her of the world beyond. Extradition! It might be so.

"You see," Basset's words reached her through a cloud of smoke, "if I really cared about it, I could land you both in prison. As I don't do that, there's no use your thinking this letter's going to hurt you. Of course—" the smoke floated upward and Basset's eyes peered from under it—"of course you have done a deal of harm already. If you do more, I might have to change my mind."

"Give me that letter."

It was as close to her as to him, but the Honorable Alexander did not stop to question the propriety of a servant's giving him orders. As her fingers closed upon the epistle he handed her he slipped from his seat upon the desk.

"You and Altieri will be very happy together," he said, and lounged forth into the moonlight.

CHAPTER XII

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

THE customs-officer perfunctorily tossed the robes in the tonneau, then stepped aside with a wave of his hand and the automobile plunged forward again on the road to Cadore.

"And now we are in Italy!" Mrs. Watson lent emphasis to her harmless exclamation by sitting upright in the car and looking restlessly about.

It was the same road, a *Route Royale*, no longer the Reichstrasse, it is true, but the same road, none the less, that ran through the Ampezzo valley. Indeed it was the same valley, its rock-guarded slopes still lined with green pastures and larch woods. Only the mountains appeared to have changed. Antelao's peak was hidden by its very nearness, and the cliffs that to Dorothy on the veranda of the hotel in Ampezzo had seemed to be castles of safety for the hunted Randolph shot upward close at hand in all the forbidding barrenness of fact.

Dorothy remembered how they had looked to her that afternoon when he came through the village street to say that he had re-

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turned to see her, and the memory gave her little comfort. It was not difficult to resent with hot anger the attacks that her mother never wearied of directing against the absent Randolph. She could silence Mrs. Watson, but she could not suppress her own misery, her wrath at Mrs. Watson, at Basset, at Lady Berwick, most of all at herself. Who was Randolph? A chance acquaintance; what did it matter to her if he was a spy and a thief, or if they chose to call him one?

"And this is Italy," repeated Mrs. Watson. "Italy, Dorothy."

The inane words thrilled the girl as all the wisdom of Solomon could not have done. It was Italy. He was there—safe, thanks to her—and now she was there also. Von Glockner and the nightmare of hunting and shooting were past, and—ideas merged in a jumble of vague emotion as she stared over the chauffeur's shoulder at a peasant's ox-cart creaking around a corner. Some latent grace she must have found in the clumsy vehicle, for her face lighted.

"*Ach*, the Fräulein loves Italy, too. To Germans Italy is the heart's desire, yes."

The spectacled eyes of Herr Horb had noticed the change in the girl. It was his car they were in and he who had arranged the party. The invitation to a simple enough expedition to the birthplace of Titian, some twenty miles away, Mrs. Watson had accepted with an alacrity quite out of proportion to her interest in old masters or her delight in motoring. In living celebrities her interest and delight were much keener; through the kind offices of Basset she had been informed that Heinrich Horb of Berlin was one of the greatest financial magnates in all Germany. The Kaiser delighted to honor him, the highest nobility paid him court. Moreover, his assiduous attentions proved a most enjoyable contrast to the inexplicable coldness of Sir John and Lady Berwick.

As for Dorothy, if she did not like the inquisitive German, perpetually studying her under his bushy eyebrows, she did not care to fight with or about him. One bone of contention in the family was enough; she preferred to reserve her strength for the combat over Randolph.

The fourth member of the party was the Honorable Alexander Basset. He went because he was asked—or if there were other reasons they did not appear—and he was asked presumably because in the eyes of the world he had now become a recognized appendage of the Watson family.

Mrs. Watson settled back in her luxurious corner, nursing a rather sickly sense of triumph. In front of her, on the one hand, was Wealth, represented by Herr Heinrich Horb, on the other Aristocracy, represented by the Honorable Alexander Basset; all about her was Italy, which was Culture. Wealth, Aristocracy, Culture, no daughter could ask more from her mother than to be surrounded by these three. Only—Mrs. Watson glanced at Dorothy and then at the road ahead.

"This is Italy," she repeated for the third time. "It is very beautiful."

"*Ach*, yes," murmured Horb. "But it is what you call inaccessible. The railroad will be an improvement, yes."

"The railroad!" Dorothy turned to the German with unaffected interest. "A railroad would spoil it."

The magnate shrugged his heavy shoulders as though to indicate his helplessness in the face of the materialism of the world. "It must come, Fräulein. Not here, but there behind that peak. It must come—as the Fräulein knows."

Surprised at the emphasis of the last words, Dorothy started. The bearded face of the German was impassive as ever, but her quick glances revealed to her unusual interest in Basset's keen features.

"I do not know," she said deliberately. "Why should I?"

Herr Horb took off his spectacles, polished them carefully with his handkerchief, replaced them on his nose and with their aid regarded Basset much as the possessor of an evening newspaper regards an inquisitive neighbor. At last he turned to Dorothy. "It is not a secret, Fräulein."

"It is to me," interrupted Basset. "I have heard of no railroad."

"*Ach*, is that so?" rumbled the German, in tones so guttural that the true meaning of the remark remained a riddle. From time to time Dorothy realized that Herr Horb's spectacles were turned in her direction, but when the automobile stopped in the plaza of Cadore there had been no further talk of the railroad.

The *portiere* of the little hotel rushed to open the door of the tonneau, but for a moment the rather melancholy party of holiday-makers retained their seats, sur-

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veying the new scene. Flanked by a billiard café, the village church rose on one side of the dusty square. A fountain played feebly in the center, an enormous sign-post close by directing the ignorant to the great attraction of Cadore, the *Casa Titziano*, the one authentic birthplace of the illustrious Titian. Despite the efforts of the fountain it was all so very sunny and so very dusty that Dorothy yearned for the dim recesses of the stone-flagged hotel corridor into which, with a word of apology for the necessity of arranging for luncheon, Herr Horb had disappeared. The noon sun beat down upon them and Mrs. Watson stirred uneasily.

"I think we will wait inside," she said. "Thank you, Mr. Basset."

She was helped from the car and Dorothy had risen to follow her when a scream startled the drowsing square: "There he is! It is some trick! I won't stay! I won't stand it!"

"Mother! Mother!" In alarm Dorothy slipped to the ground, her arm encircling the capacious waist of the enraged lady. "There's no one, mother——"

She stopped short, for there was no one listening. Basset, Mrs. Watson, the chauffeur and the entire unemployed population of the square were staring at the hotel doorway.

"Certainly, Mrs. Watson, it is I."

The voice which the hum of the automobile had been driving into her ears over all the miles of white highroad sounded now clear and firm, as Randolph himself stepped out into the plaza and bowed before them. At the apparition Dorothy's supporting arm dropped from her mother. In truth they were in Italy.

"Can I do anything for you?" asked the obnoxious individual. Mrs. Watson made an unsuccessful attempt to grasp the tattered relics of her dignity.

"Go away," she almost sobbed. "Go away, or I'll have you arrested.

"Hardly, I think," answered Randolph. "Let me remind you that you appear to have come to me, not I to you."

Over his shoulder Dorothy observed a series of elaborate bows in the owner of which she recognized Caprile, the Italian who had been arrested for the crime of inquiring for the man with whom he now was.

"Come to you! *I* come to you!" In her unbounded astonishment Mrs. Watson actually attained to some degree of impressiveness. "But I will stand this no longer. We will go. Start the car!" and she waved imperiously at the wide-mouthed chauffeur.

In reply the man merely grinned. German like his master, if he understood the order at all, he understood also that the hand which pays is the hand to be obeyed. Unmindful of this, Mrs. Watson insisted on a retreat to the safety of Herr Horb's automobile. She was helped into the car by the attentive Basset and sank quivering into the cushions. Basset and Dorothy remained to face the foe.

In the face of this extraordinary reception, Randolph seemed disposed to stand his ground. Paying no further attention to Mrs. Watson, he glanced quickly at Dorothy, favored the Honorable Alexander with one sharp, direct look and then studied the automobile and the chauffeur.

"That is Horb's car, isn't it?"

A sudden impulse to giggle seized the girl. No other response seemed adequate to the absurdity of it all. Horb's car! What had that to do with it? The giggle was suppressed, but it was a bewildered "Yes" that came in its place from her lips.

"Where is Horb?" Randolph looked about him as one who feels he has been led into a trap.

"In there," Dorothy pointed to the hotel, not stopping to ask herself why she should be catechized in this fashion.

"I did not know you knew him," said Randolph, the puzzled air intensified.

"There is no reason why you should have." The demon of jealousy, roused by the sight of the girl's agitation, prompted Basset to interfere. "Miss Watson knows many persons—some of them stranger than Herr Horb."

The American eyed him for a moment.

"So it seems," he said dryly. "You are going back to Ampezzo this afternoon, Miss Watson?"

Though he chose to put it as a question, he seemed in no doubt of his answer. None came, however. In the silence that followed, Randolph looked steadily at the girl's averted face, waiting for something, waiting greedily. And as steadily as he looked, Basset looked also, but watching, not expecting. The pause ended abruptly:

"Dorothy, I want you here—at once! Mr. Basset, *will* you find Herr Horb? I insist upon going!"

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At the sharp summons Dorothy's face flushed and her head went high. For an instant she hesitated. When she turned at last toward the car she went not in obedience but scorning to contribute to a public scene. With one foot on the running-board, her eye fell on Basset, holding open the door of the tonneau. Deliberately she faced about with outstretched hand.

"Good-by, Mr. Ashburn. We are returning to America; I shall see you soon, I hope."

For a moment their hands and eyes met. Then, with assistance from no one, she entered the car and seated herself by her mother's side. A vicious slam of the door announced that the Honorable Alexander had followed, but still the car did not move. The three sat motionless in their seats; from the ground, bareheaded, with Caprile at his elbow, Randolph, or Ashburn, stared upward; the chauffeur, twisted on his seat, surveyed the group with Teutonic stolidity.

His air of unconcerned contemplation Mrs. Watson bitterly resented. "Why doesn't the man start?" she cried. "Where is Herr Horb? This is shameful! Where is Herr Horb, Mr. Basset?"

Randolph took a step forward.

"I think, Mrs. Watson——" he had begun, when Caprile caught him by the arm. A flood of voluble Italian, punctuated by vigorous gestures toward the hotel door, cut short his speech. What Caprile said was intelligible to Randolph alone; to him it was evidently distasteful. Nevertheless, with an impatient shrug, he appeared to acquiesce, turning from the car with another bow to Dorothy.

"*Au revoir*," he said, and then the two strode off, turned the nearest corner, and were gone.

In their wake the Honorable Alexander scrambled to the ground in search of Horb, the host and deliverer. He was met by that gentleman himself, returning to his guests with a broad smile of hospitality.

"Inside they have dinner already," he announced, "so I ask you to refresh yourselves now, and afterwards we will visit the *Casa Tiziano*, is it not?"

"Herr Horb, I do not wish to remain here!" Now that Randolph was removed from her presence, Mrs. Watson was able to command something of her accustomed dignity of speech.

"But, *madame!*" The German stared in blunt amazement. "But *madame*, we are just arrived!"

"I can not consent to remain here," reiterated Mrs. Watson. "I do not consider it respectable."

"*Aber!*" In his surprise Horb lapsed into his native tongue. "*Aber!*" He broke off to turn about, surveying all sides of the glaring square.

"*Was für dummheit!*" he growled, but as Mrs. Watson understood no German the frank comment made no impression. Since she remained, however, immovably virtuous in the tonneau, it was essential that something be done.

"Will you please to get down," he said, holding out his arm for her. "There is no other place, and we must eat."

"Are you aware, Herr Horb," Mrs. Watson faced him rigidly, "are you aware that that man is here? Had I known he was here I should never have consented to come. I can say no more."

The bewildered gentleman looked helplessly at his three guests, then turned in despair to Dorothy.

"What is it, then, that she says?" he demanded.

Dorothy hesitated. She remembered the road from Pocol with Horb's face turned back to her after she had left Randolph, the tobacco shop in Ampezzo in which the American had sought refuge, the eyes peering and poking in the darkness the night Randolph had fled before Von Glockner's men. Now for the fourth time Fate had put the German on Randolph's trail. Nothing would be learned from her—on that she was determined.

But while she hesitated, her mother answered for her:

"That man Randolph, or Ashburn, or whatever the scoundrel's real name is, he is here, I say. He is a criminal, Herr Horb, and I do not associate with criminals. I——"

"So! Ashburn—it is Ashburn. You are very certain, already?"

"Certain, Herr Horb! Of course I am not certain of anything connected with such a person. I——"

Again the German interrupted impatiently: "Well, well, we shall see. Where is he now?"

"Upon my word, Herr Horb! Why do you ask me that? I say that I refuse absolutely to recognize him in any way!" The

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magnate regarded her with a smile in which there lurked a touch of authority.

"Good, Mrs. Watson, good. You will not have to. I make it my affair. And now the dinner is waiting. We shall go in?"

In the coolness of the dining-room the ruffled tempers of the party were soothed. Mrs. Watson even relented so far as to attempt an apology for the disturbance she had caused, explaining to her host at some length a few of the many reasons for holding Randolph in abomination, but Horb merely answered that such episodes were inevitably distressing. At the time he appeared to take no further interest in the subject, but when Mrs. Watson and Basset were busy with the guide-book he caught Dorothy's eye across the table.

"*Ach*, Miss Watson, your friend whose name I asked—I know it now," and he applied himself to the cheese like one well satisfied with the morning's work.

His satisfaction endured throughout the afternoon. No further contact with the detested Randolph had annoyed Mrs. Watson, and when they stopped in front of the Hotel Ampezzo, she echoed heartily Herr Horb's enthusiasm over the pleasure of the day.

So pleased was the good lady that she accepted with avidity the banker's invitation for another excursion on the next day. She could not think, she said, with an inward wince at her unfortunate excitement in the plaza of Cadore, of denying such enjoyment to her daughter. She did not add that since the proposed trip was to be in the opposite direction there was no danger of Dorothy's suffering from intruders upon the alliance of Wealth and Aristocracy.

Dorothy's opinion was not asked and she did not offer it. However, the omission threw no damper upon the spirits of the party. The Honorable Alexander Basset was delighted to accept; Mrs. Watson was charmed. In the best of humors Herr Horb departed to bury himself with his secretary in the seclusion of his own room.

Far more content he was than the tenant of the room above him. Late that night, when the hotel was in darkness and the mountain walls of the valley rose in silent grandeur above the sleeping village, Captain Count von Glockner turned back from his balcony with a gesture of helpless resignation. Drawing from his pocket a crumpled letter he spread it on the table and read the words he knew by heart:

> Ashburn, alias Randolph, will be at the Belvedere at five o'clock to-morrow. This is certain.

The message was in German and there was no signature. Von Glockner eyed the paper with a scowl as though he regarded its presence in his room as an insult. Once he made a motion as though to tear the offending sheet in two, but thinking better of it, he folded it carefully away in a pocketbook.

"*Mein Gott!*" he growled. "Is a Von Glockner a policeman? And the Fräulein is charming! This is no work for a gentleman, an officer of the Emperor——" he straightened abruptly and his hand rose to the salute. "An officer of the Emperor! It is that—an officer of the Emperor!"

His decision was reached. With no further self-communion, he made himself ready for bed, and the last light in the Hotel Ampezzo was extinguished.

CHAPTER XIII

HIGH in the mountain wall of the Ampezzo valley, in the shadow of the jagged teeth of the Croda da Lago, there is a narrow gap across which runs a low stone wall, an insignificant link in a mighty chain of rock. On the north a rough path cut in the mountain's crumbled face leads to it from a *Hütte* of the Alpine Society; on the south steep pastures of scanty grass climb upward from a chaos of ravines and gullies. No Summer day is so quiet that a bleak wind does not storm through the pass, and the traveler who has climbed to the Forcella da Lago, the "Jaws of the Lake," does not linger long to survey the splendid sweep of mountain and valley below him.

On the southerly side of this wall, early in the afternoon of the day following the excursion to Cadore, a man was crouching, his eyes level with the topmost stones. His attitude disclosed two things: first, a desire to watch the northern approach to the Forcella, and secondly, an attempt to shelter himself from the eternal wind. He had been there for an hour and still the only signs of life were the houses of Ampezzo, thousands of feet below him, and a whiff of smoke from the nearer *Hütte*.

Rising at last with a grunt of chilly satisfaction, he stepped over the wall into the Empire of Austria, revealing, had there been

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any one to see, the tall figure of Randolph still clad in the loose Italian garments for which he had discarded the green costume of the Tyrol. Von Glockner's informant was correct. The fugitive had returned and the route that he was taking would bring him to the Belvedere at four o'clock.

As he passed from the desolate, exposed uplands into the silent larches he began to whistle, and the look on his face was not that of the hunted criminal. Only when his road had taken him far down the mountain did his caution return.

"I don't much like it," Randolph muttered. "It's been too blamed easy. Anyhow, it's not like her. I don't understand it and I never have. I— Oh, rot!" He stepped out into the exposed highway, turning toward the inn. "The railroad be hanged! I'm playing this for myself."

Through the open fields and past the tables of the Pocol inn he went unmolested. Beyond another patch of wood he came to the sheer face of a cliff with a cabin converted into a Summer restaurant perched upon its brow and rough tables placed along the edge. Before him was the whole panorama of the Ampezzo valley, mountain and field, wood and highway, sleeping in the afternoon sun. It was twenty minutes to four and Randolph was at the Belvedere.

Three or four Germans, expatiating in enthusiastic gutturals upon the beauty of the prospect, were his only neighbors. There was nothing alarming in them, and with a mug of beer before him Randolph resigned himself to wait the twenty minutes. On the opposite slope, at the edge of the larches, points of light flashed as the sun struck the windows of the Hotel Ampezzo; along the floor of the valley an occasional puff of dust curled against the blue sky as an automobile sped by; close at hand a robust woman and a heavy-footed man hustled back and forth as the Germans turned from the view to coffee and cake.

In the fields above the village, where the road wound upward close to the Belvedere, past Pocol and on to Falzareggo, a moving dot caught Randolph's eye. "A hard climb for a car," he thought, "but she has no machine. I wonder how she is coming—if she comes at all." For the tenth time he pulled his watch surreptitiously from his pocket. It was five minutes to four, and still the Germans, the attendants and he were the sole tenants of the Belvedere. His eyes left the dot upon the Falzareggo road and wandered aimlessly over the valley. He knew that it was an automobile, but he did not recognize it as Herr Horb's, nor could he hear the conversation of the occupants.

"But, Herr Horb!" Mrs. Watson suddenly awoke to the fact that they had left the homeward road and were on the wrong side of the little river. "But, Herr Horb, this is not the way to the Hotel Ampezzo."

The magnate smiled benignly upon her: "I know it, but this is your last day in Ampezzo; to-morrow you go, and the Fräulein tells me that she would like once more to have tea at the Belvedere."

"The Belvedere! You're going to the Belvedere!" The Honorable Alexander Basset shot the words out with an emphasis which startled even the chauffeur ahead of him.

"*Aber*, yes, the Belvedere. Why not?" Horb surveyed his companion with the air of mild surprise which had become almost a habit with him in his present company. "Why not the Belvedere?" he repeated. "The Fräulein says——"

"Oh, don't go on my account," interrupted Dorothy. "I merely thought the Belvedere was so beautiful it would be pleasant to see it again before we left."

"I hope you enjoy it!" growled Basset so roughly that Horb turned square upon him.

"If the gentleman wishes, I can leave him here. For myself I propose to give myself the honor of taking Fräulein Watson to the Belvedere."

The glare in Basset's eyes hardly matched the lightness of his answer:

"Why on earth should you leave me here? Beastly hot, I call it. Barge along to the Belvedere. It's a fine day to do the place."

He laughed a little and his uneasy glance wandered to Mrs. Watson. The flush on that lady's face recalled to his memory the fact that before Randolph fell utterly from grace he had once gone with them to tea on the cliff's summit. It was apparent that Mrs. Watson remembered the occasion and that the recollection gave her no pleasure. For once, however, she controlled her tongue. The car puffed upward, and if it held a silent party at least there was outward calm.

Breasting the slope and turning into the woods, the car slipped so noiselessly down upon the tables that only the final jar of the brakes roused Randolph from his contemplation of the valley. Twisting his head

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to glance at the new arrivals, he sprang abruptly to his feet, the beer-stein crashing to the ground.

"Good Lord!" he cried under his breath. "Good Lord!"

From Dorothy to Herr Horb, from Mrs. Watson to Basset, but always back to Dorothy, his eyes flashed, and his hand, thrust into his coat pocket, closed over a letter resting there, as though he would convince himself anew of its presence. The fall of the shattered stein and the sound of his up-leaping drew the attention of all four. Rigid with astonishment and indignation, Mrs. Watson sat, too dumbfounded at the detested apparition even to protest. But not of her, nor of the Honorable Alexander, suddenly become unobtrusive in the background of the scene, nor of the spectacled, placid German, still with his air of mild surprise, did Randolph take notice. Dorothy's eyes had found his and he held them.

It was Horb who broke the silence. Descending from the car, he raised his hat with Teutonic formality.

"Good afternoon, Herr Ashburn. Miss Watson said that she wished to come, but I did not know that it was for this."

Ashburn looked steadily beyond him at the girl. "Nor did I," he answered shortly.

Drawing the letter from his pocket, he walked past the German to the door of the tonneau. "Why did you tell me to come?" he asked.

"Tell you to come?" The flush that mounted slowly in Dorothy's pale face might have been anger. If it was, bewilderment mastered it.

"Yes. Here is the letter, and here are you and"—he paused, a little bitterly—"here are several others into the bargain!"

"The letter?" Mechanically she stretched out her hand for the paper he held. Quite oblivious to her mother's gathering fury, she spread it out. "We are leaving for America at once," she read aloud. "On Friday at four o'clock I shall have tea alone at the Belvedere. The next day we leave. D. W."

She stopped. For a moment there was a silence so tense that the Germans chattering at the near-by table felt it and the people of the little restaurant halted in their work to stare. Then:

"Dorothy!" gasped Mrs. Watson. "Dorothy! You didn't write that!"

The flush was gone from Dorothy's face now and her lips were set. She did not look at Ashburn as she handed the letter back to him. "There has been enough of this," she said steadily. "Herr Horb, I will ask you to take me home at——. *Oh-h!*"

From somewhere there rose before her the blue-coated figure of the Captain Count von Glockner.

"Your pardon, Fräulein, quite enough. Herr Ashburn, I have the honor to arrest you!"

From the hand upon his shoulder Ashburn leaped away—to face a leveled revolver. The Captain's voice rang out in sharp command:

"Halt! Halt or I fire!"

Where they had come from he did not know, but one quick glance told Ashburn that he was surrounded by soldiers. The little restaurant might have held more than teapots and beer-steins, or the dingy uniforms might have lurked unseen in the shadows of the woods. It did not matter which. There was a ring of steel about him and Von Glockner's revolver was pointed at his breast. Ashburn saw and shrugged his shoulders.

"You've got me," he said to the Captain. "What next?"

The officer of the Emperor said nothing, but with the same movement of his hand he slipped the revolver back into his pocket and motioned to his men to close in. As Ashburn watched him, a dull flush crept into the face of the smart young officer and he bit his mustache.

"Who told you I was to be here?" demanded the American.

"This is no time for questions," returned Von Glockner stiffly. "You are under arrest. There is nothing to discuss."

Ashburn turned away from him to the car.

"At least you will tell me that you did not write this!" He tapped the letter in his hand and once again his eyes held Dorothy's.

But the girl was incapable of reply. She could only stare at the trapped man with white face and wide, terrified eyes. Once her lips moved, but no sound came from them. And as he waited for the answer that did not come, Ashburn's brows slowly gathered.

"You will tell me," he began again, but Mrs. Watson, long silent from amazement transformed so miraculously into triumph, interrupted:

"Herr Horb, Herr Horb, this is no scene for my daughter! I insist upon leaving.

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Mr. Basset, I insist upon leaving. Dorothy, do not answer him!"

Von Glockner stepped forward to lay his hand again upon his victim's shoulder.

"We are disturbing the ladies," he said. "You will come with me." This time Ashburn did not move from the arresting hand, but his eyes still held Dorothy's with the same question in them.

"Come!" repeated Von Glockner more roughly and his grasp tightened. "Come!"

Suddenly the girl found her voice:

"I did not write that letter. It is not my handwriting. You knew that."

Ashburn bowed a little awkwardly, for the grip of the Austrian was heavy upon him.

"I have never seen your writing. I did not think it was you. Good-by." He twisted under the Captain's hand and faced him. "And now, sir, what do you wish me to do? Take your hand off. I shall not escape."

The Count took his hand away as though the American's shoulder were a red-hot iron.

"For the present we will go there," and he pointed to the inn.

"Your pardon, *Herr Kapitan*, we will not."

Von Glockner's disgust at his work broke free. In sudden wrath he turned upon the stolid figure of the Berlin banker.

"Do you interfere?" he cried. "Be still, or——"

"Yes, I interfere," interrupted Horb calmly. "Yes, I interfere."

Ashburn turned for the first time to look at the man from whom he had so consistently fled.

"It seems that you do," he said contemptuously. "So you build railroads with forged letters from young girls, do you?"

"No," answered Horb, quite unmoved, "no, I do not; many things I do, but not that."

The officer of the Emperor stretched out his hand in a gesture of command:

"Be gone, you and your friends! Ashburn I arrest as an enemy of the Emperor, a spy, a robber of the Emperor's servants. Some one of you is the informer; I spit upon him! There is your car. Go!"

Horb did not stir. "It appears," he remarked, "that you do not know who I am."

"I do not wish to," retorted the Captain, recovering his accustomed stiffness with an effort. "You will depart, and at once!"

In reply the German raised his hat with a formal bow. "I am Heinrich Horb," he said, "of Berlin."

The Count's jaw dropped and he stared, simply and openly, like a frightened child.

"I do not need to remind an officer of your intelligence," remarked the banker, "that a personal friend of the Emperor of Germany is not to be ordered about with impunity—nor to be insulted."

He shifted his mild gaze from the dumbfounded Von Glockner to the motley group—the holiday-making Germans staring with wide-open eyes, the restaurant servants visibly shaking in the presence of the hated and dreaded uniform of Austria, Mrs. Watson torn by indignation and curiosity, Dorothy, white and rigid, the unobtrusive Basset. At last the gold-mounted spectacles rested upon the prisoner.

"*Ach*, Herr Ashburn, you American financiers! You are not always triumphant, *nicht wahr?*"

Ashburn merely thrust his hands into his pockets and turned his back upon the man, staring out upon the peaceful valley. Herr Horb regarded him with the air of mild surprise that had become a habit, then turned to Von Glockner.

"Why do you arrest this man?"

The Captain shrugged his shoulders:

"He is a spy and he has attacked the uniform of the Emperor."

"I do not think he has," said the banker. "I do not think he has."

"Then in God's name who sent me here?" Ashburn turned fiercely upon the German. "If this isn't your trap, whose is it? Build your railroad and be hanged to you! I wouldn't have it at the price you pay, nor my father either!"

Horb met the outburst with a serene smile: "The price I pay and the price your father pays—they are the same. We are partners now, not rivals. If you change your name, then you can not learn what happens. Herr Ashburn, the papa, and I, we are agreed. Also the Governments of Austria and Italy. So the railroad will be built—by the papa and by me together. Not through here, perhaps,"—he waved his hand over the unspoiled fields below—"not here, but somewhere it will be built."

Ashburn's hands came out of his pockets and the contempt vanished from his face.

"You knew this—knew it all the time?" he gasped.

"If I did not know it it would not be so,"

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answered Horb with simple pride. "I *make* it, not *know* it."

Ashburn stretched out his hand: "I have to ask your pardon, Herr Horb. I am ashamed to say I thought you trapped me to clear the road for your own schemes."

"My friend, you Americans are wonderful people. You have money, but how you get it I do not know, for wisdom you have not." Horb took the outstretched hand frankly. "Your father plans with Italy, I plan with Austria. Neither wins. But I have wisdom to arrange with both—that your father has not. But also money I must have to build, and that your father has. Therefore we are partners—what you call a syndicate. You need not have run from me. What harm could I do?"

"You might have done a lot," retorted Randolph. "We had the Italian end of the business nearly closed and you knew nothing about it. I didn't care to tell you how far we had gone."

Horb smiled: "So you thought I did not know? You have been here, looking and studying and planning, and when the Italian Government signed the contract you would say to me, 'One end of the road is ours, now give us the rest.' Well, it is over now. We build the railroad—Italy and Austria, Ashburn and Horb. Come, we will drink a bottle to the grand alliance."

He started toward his car with Ashburn following, a rather dazed young agent of an astute American capitalist. For the third time that afternoon the hand of Captain Count von Glockner fell upon the young man's shoulder.

"Your pardon, Herr Horb," he said firmly, "but Herr Ashburn is my prisoner."

"Prisoner!" The magnate glared upon the blue-coated officer. "Prisoner! I tell you he is my friend!"

Von Glockner spread out his hands in deprecation. His manner had been marvelously transformed, but his determination remained.

"It is unfortunate. He is my prisoner."

The ominous click of steel spurs and saber rang in Dorothy's ears with all the menace it had carried for days. Horb passed his hand in perplexity over his broad forehead.

"It is true. It is true. Oh, my friend, how you have blundered! How much better if you had remained in America!"

In answer Ashburn raised his eyes to the tonneau of the car. Mrs. Watson sat there mute, alternately crimson with outraged propriety and tense with ungratified curiosity. Behind her broad shoulder lurked the face of the Honorable Alexander Basset, the supercilious blond mustache gnawed and bedraggled by the nervous working of his mouth. Over these Ashburn passed unmoved, to rest his glance upon the figure of a girl, upright in her seat, pale, with dark, startled eyes. Von Glockner's hand was still upon his shoulder when he spoke:

"I have blundered, but I am glad I did not remain in America."

The German's spectacles followed the gaze of his new-found friend. Some dim memory graced the heavy face with an unaccustomed light. Gravely he lifted his hat and bowed—to no one of the strange party, but to the world—perhaps to a half-remembered vision of his own.

"*Herr Kapitan*," he turned with assured dignity to the Austrian officer, "this is a gentleman of repute, well known to me. It appears that he has entangled himself with your Government. Mistakes occur. If you must arrest him, I ask that you treat him as a gentleman. The mistake will be rectified. You have the word of Heinrich Horb."

Once again the click of steel sounded in Dorothy's ears, and this time without menace. Count von Glockner had merely brought his heels together to bow to the friend of the German Emperor.

"There are certain formalities, Herr Horb, but they will doubtless be arranged as you wish." He, too, glanced at the occupants of the car and his face lightened. "The work was distasteful. As a gentleman, I could not believe——"

He stopped short, his forehead dark again. From his pocket he drew a sheet of paper much as Ashburn had done, and studied it. Then, with the thing still clenched in his hand, he raised his head:

"As a gentleman I do not like unsigned letters. Who sent me this?"

No one answered. For a second Von Glockner swept the group in one swift glance that even Dorothy felt and met, then:

"For a minute I thought—but I apologize. Now I know."

With a single stride the Count was at the side of the automobile. His long, blue-clad arms shot out to grasp the

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Englishman by the collar. One powerful jerk and the Honorable Alexander was on the ground before him.

"It was either you or she. And it is you!"

A spurred foot flashed in the sunlight and a dapper young man tumbled forward into the trees that lined the roadway. Then suddenly the Count's Continental, emotional nature asserted itself.

"I will not fight you!" he screamed. "If you challenge, my servant shall whip you! Bah!"

At the sight of his pose of righteous contempt, Ashburn broke into an Anglo-Saxon laugh. It, too, was a little hysterical, but that fact passed unnoticed. Stretching out the letter he had held throughout clutched in his hand, he turned to Von Glockner:

"You have heard what Herr Horb has said. I came here in the interests of the new railroad. It is half Italian, half Austrian. My father worked from the Italian end, Horb from the Austrian. We were rivals once, now Herr Horb says we are partners. I am no spy—just a civil engineer prospecting. I did not rob your man. That was—well, we will see about that. You know Horb, and you have his word. Will you accept it?"

The flood of English bewildered the excited Captain. He looked vaguely from the banker to his captive, the last words alone distinct in his mind.

"Certainly, certainly," he muttered.

"Then there is the car—room for you and Horb and Mrs. Watson. Basset can walk," Ashburn added grimly. "I shall report at the Hotel Ampezzo at seven o'clock. Miss Watson—" the paper in his hand shook a little "—I have an invitation to tea with Miss Watson at the Belvedere this afternoon!"

Once more his eyes met Dorothy's. Very quietly the girl rose, opened the door of the car, and stepped to the ground. Ashburn faced her mother:

"My name," he said, "is Thomas Randolph Ashburn. Herr Horb can tell you who I am, and you may have heard of my father."

About ten o'clock that night Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Berwick lounged out of the billiard-room with a cigar in his mouth. In the hallway was his wife knitting.

"Muriel," he remarked, "there's a chap inside who says Basset's the third son of that South African rascal who bought a title with watered diamond-mine stock and then went broke. You really ought to read 'Burke's Peerage' more carefully. I said that fellow was a bounder. Burke would tell you all about it." He paused: "Randolph's back," he said casually.

Lady Berwick dropped her knitting. "Back! He's being looked for——"

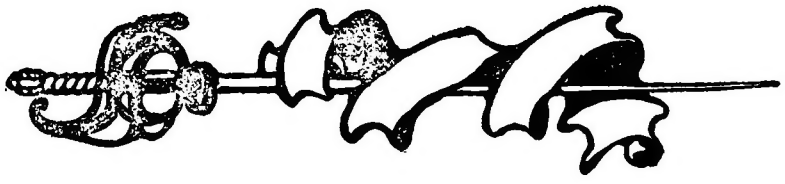
"Yes, I know. He's found, too. Oh, that's all right." He answered a gesture of alarm from his wife. "Horb, the Berlin chap, is attending to all that. Pulls a strong oar at Vienna, you know, as well as Berlin. He'll fix Altieri, Katrina's friend, too. He can do anything of that sort. By the way,"—Sir John chuckled to himself—"Randolph's going to marry Miss Watson. I always thought there was something there. I've seen that sort of thing before."

Lady Berwick picked up her knitting again.

"Of course," she said. "Where are they? I'd like to congratulate them."

Sir John laughed:

"They're looking at Antelao in the moonlight. I wouldn't trouble. Mrs. Watson's talking to Von Glockner in the salon. You might congratulate her. He wouldn't mind."



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